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ABSTRACT

This collection of conference papers from New Zealand's Early Childhood Development Unit's November 1992 Parent Support Conference and the Parenting Promotion Launch presents a wide range of views on parenting and shows the support available for parents from numerous organizations. The conference began 2 weeks of activities throughout New Zealand to encourage parents to become involved with their children. The following papers are included: (1) "Positive Parenting" (opening address by Jenny Shipley); (2) "Creating Pathways to Empower Parents" (keynote address by Douglas Powell); (3) "Parents...Parenting" (keynote address by Rose Pere); (4) "Plunket in the Nineties" (Gill Cleland and Helen Corrigan); (5) "A Community Based Approach to Parent Support" (Jan Gerritsen); (6) "Support for Parents of Children with Special Needs" (Denise Gibbard and Sharon Brandford); (7) "Parents as First Teachers Pilot Project" (Janice Grigor); (8) "Anau Ako Pasifika" (Puroku Hall and Lineahi Lund), which is a home-based early childhood care program; (9) "Parent Education: An Experiment of Nature or by Design?" (Bruce McMillan); and (10) "Early Childhood Development Unit Parent Support Projects" (Huhana Rokx and Meagan Pene). Speaker profiles and three Parenting Promotion Launch speeches are also included. (MM)

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1992 Parent Support Conference Papers

Ara Whakamana
Pathways to Empowerment

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1992 Parent Support Conference Papers

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Foreword

Tena koutou katoa

The importance of parenting cannot be underestimated — it is perhaps one of the most critical areas of ones life with children, and one of the least valued and understood. Becoming a parent happens naturally, but working out how to parent is a learned thing.

These papers from the Early Childhood Development Unit's November 1992 Parent Support Conference "Ara Whakamana Pathways to Empowerment" and Parenting Promotion Launch present a wide range of views on parenting and show the support available for parents from numerous organisations.

The conference began two weeks of activities around New Zealand which were accompanied by the following slogan "Kids, give them some time now and who knows what will happen".

It's a simple message, but one which says that spending time with children helps us to better understand and enjoy them and their thinking and to see the world through their eyes.

I invite you to take the time to read these papers and discover new "pathways to empowerment" for parents and children.

Te rito o te harakeke
Hei here te matauranga

The shoot of the flax
Ties together the knowledge

Pam Kennedy, General Manager
Early Childhood Development Unit

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Positive Parenting

Hon Jenny Shipley
Minister of Social Welfare

Ask parents what they wish for their children when they are grown and most will answer "for them to be happy, independent, successful well-adjusted adults and citizens".

Ask them how they will help achieve this, through their parenting and you may hear silence.

Parenting is the most influential task that we as adults are privileged to take on and yet so little attention and effort is made in equipping parents with the skills to do so effectively.

The only real knowledge that we have is the way our own parents have raised us or the weird and wonderful images provided via the visual medium.

In many cases this is inadequate and leads to creating or repeating patterns of dysfunctional parenting in a part of the community.

Size of families, income, history and the environment in which our children live all count.

As parents we discover the significance and permanence of family relationships and unconsciously we tend to preserve, for better or worse, the attitudes, values and behaviours that were a way of life to us as children.

The role of parenting in today's fast changing society is particularly demanding and the changes mean that we can no longer rely on family memory or tradition to decide what is best for our children.

Our parents never had to face the pressures that society now places on our children.

So what's the solution you may ask?

And upon whom does the responsibility fall?

- The government
- Community
- or Families

Positive Parenting - Hon Jenny Shipley

It won't surprise you to hear me say I think the greatest responsibility lies with parents.

Over and above that I believe the single greatest investment we can collectively make in our children is not money or education but time.

And I note with interest this Conference's promotional slogan "Kids: Give them some time now and who knows what will happen".

Time is a priceless gift to give your child. It costs so little and returns so much.

Talking and listening are perhaps the two greatest keys to successful parenting.

Sounds simple but in the hurly-burly of the day when we try to balance family and work responsibilities how often does talking and listening to our children go by the board.

What's more there are sadly some parents who simply don't have the skills or understand the importance of making the time to have this happen.

Did you stop to challenge your child's non-committal answer the last time they told you "nothing much" had happened in their day when asked?

Did you let it go last time your child dismissed your question of "How are you?" with an off-hand "I'm fine?"

Getting behind who your child is to what they are really thinking is the key to a positive family relationship.

How well we communicate with our children is significant not only in ensuring that they grow up secure and confident in themselves but also when it becomes their turn to parent they will have those skills to pass on to their children.

This most critical of issues is understood but only randomly responded to.

So what support is there for parents?

In the past, support often came from within the extended family and the immediate neighbourhood.

Today this close family network is not so common. It can be developed.
It can be revived. But it will take work.

In addition the very nature of the family has also changed dramatically over the last two decades. There has been a marked shift from the "traditional" nuclear two parent family.

Today more than a quarter of all children in New Zealand are now raised in sole parent families. More women than ever before are working outside the home and balancing work and family responsibilities.

Within the changed environment I believe there are a number of challenges to be met in providing support for parents, by families themselves, by communities and by the state.

It is this issue of facing challenges by the family, the community and the state that I wish to address.

Firstly, the family:

The nineties need to see families move to a fair sharing of roles and responsibilities.

Children are entitled to know that their parents will accept responsibility for them from the time they are born.

Our Children, Young Persons and their Families Act, the benefit system, and the child support legislation all send that consistent message.

The care, protection, control and financial support of children is the responsibility of family in the first instance.

The state will step in if necessary but as a back-stop not the prime provider.

Having said that, to place a real value in our children, parents of the future must be mature enough and committed enough to accept that children born to them are theirs to shape but not to own and that there is a lifetime bond and commitment to that child, who will eventually move on to independence.

These children will be a reflection of their parents' efforts and caring.

In other words it is not the role of the Crown to tell parents how they should raise their children but it is the role of the Crown to try to invest in such a way so
that parents of today can ensure that the children of tomorrow know who they are and what can be achieved by them as young people and adults.

The framework needs to be set so this can be achieved. I believe the recently enacted child support legislation sends a very clear message in this regard — parenting is for life.

So whether a child is being raised in a two parent or sole parent family, the child needs to know that both parents have a commitment to them.

Individual families need to be able to assess their strengths and their weaknesses and realistically strive for a balance in compensating for the weakness.

While it has long been established that children need a balanced influence from both males and females to grow into balanced adults and citizens there is little to be gained by sole parents flagellating themselves over the absence of one parent in a child's life.

But good support groups for sole parents are available if needed or desired.

At the same time two parent families should not sit back smugly and assume their mere presence will produce a well rounded child.

They too need to be mindful of what works in their family and what's missing.

It is time to creatively address the imbalances that occur within families.

Positive parenting mean participation by both parents.

Votes Health, Social Welfare, Justice, Education and Lottery all fund a vast collection of positive programmes that support families.

I believe we need to reorganise this funding to ensure a good part of it goes into preventative and positive programmes.

Currently this is random. Two Ministers and I are currently seeing how this can be overcome.

At the community level I would challenge the community to think about the value of parenting and the networks that perhaps are no longer there or are not accessible for some people and consider what contribution individuals can make to acknowledge the value of parenting for our society.

In the wider community context perhaps the greatest challenge is with businesses in supporting parents.

For those parents who combine work and family responsibilities the demands are great.

It is in the interests of businesses to support parents needing to make care and education arrangements for their children. The availability of quality child care can have a profound effect on productivity.

With more women entering the workforce than ever before the need for employers to consider providing childcare facilities is greater than ever.

This need not only be providing on-site facilities but many creative solutions are already available such as sponsoring places in childcare facilities or simply fostering a work environment that sanctions openness and honesty when it comes to employees being able to say to their employers they need time to make arrangements to take their child to the doctor or to get their sick child to a carer.

The words "I feel sick" can strike dread into any working parent especially if they are uttered before 8 o'clock on a working morning.

No figures in New Zealand have been produced to show the loss of productivity by employees simply having to be absent while caring for sick children.

It's a challenge for community and business to find a solution that will support parents faced with sick children.

The equal employment opportunities trust has currently funded a pilot project called "Friendly to Families" which is addressing the special needs of working people who also have family responsibilities.

It's promising and contemporary work. I await the results with interest.

Finally, the role of the state in meeting the challenge of supporting parents.

As the state, we collectively agree what obligation we have to invest in the family and children to ensure that at least we do what we can to allow our children to reach their full potential.

Our extensive welfare, social service, education, health and justice systems are part of that collective agreement to help children's growth and development.

There are a number of specific programmes that the government directly funds to assist the development of young children.

* Early childhood education services such as kindergartens, playcentres, Kohanga Reo and Pacific Island Language Nests — which despite the doomsayers have grown in number from 3,083 overall in the year ending 1991 to 3,323 in the year ending 1992.

* The Parents as First Teachers programme is being piloted over the next three years.

* Comprehensive vaccination programmes.

* Child care support subsidies which have had double the expected up take.

The welfare, health and education systems set the parameters in which families can freely operate and get on with their lives.

In the vast majority of cases families do exactly that despite the government and they require little or no intervention from the state. So what happens when families fly apart?

We all agree that the state must intervene when family dysfunction occurs, not only in the interests of the child but also for the wider good of society.

How we manage that intervention in the crisis management of the family is the important issue bearing in mind that the state cannot become a pseudo-family.

The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act is the legislative framework within which we manage that intervention.

The first principle of the Act is to require families to accept responsibility for their children and to be involved in finding solutions whether it be a care and protection or youth justice matter.

In recent weeks the spotlight has been on the core of the Act — the family group conference.

In all the headlines generated by the debate over child abuse I was disappointed to see how the interests of the child were overlooked while adults spent an enormous amount of energy defending their position.

Some who want to wish away problems blame them on poverty, benefit cuts and so on.

Now while I don't agree with all that Dr Geddis of Plunket would say, in his recently released book there is a section on causes of abuse which is worth reading.

It confirms that intergenerational facts are the most significant issue in abuse and confirms environmental issues such as unemployment or pornography can trigger the events that lead to abuse.

Reported child abuse is dramatically increasing in this country which in some way is a good thing.

There is no research to show if it is the incidence or the increased reporting that has led to this increase. There are hard issues that need to be discussed.

They are unpleasant and very contentious but if abuse of our children is to be dealt with we cannot continue to gloss over, blame, justify or walk away from the hard facts.

When the state does intervene in a case of child abuse, it is not left to the family alone to decide what should be done.
When a family group conference is convened not only is the wider family involved but a number of statutory officers such as social workers and the police are involved.

If the social worker or police do not agree with the resolution proposed by the family and the matter cannot be settled by the family group conference then they are required to refer the matter to the Court.

The Children, Young Persons and their Families Act is profound in so far as it recognises that if things go wrong in the family it is no good simply removing the child and thinking the state can do better.

The only role the state should ever contemplate is doing what is necessary with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the family unit can continue to function together if that is at all possible.

Only when that has failed after every attempt at repair, should an alternative permanent placement for a child be sought.

The Act is there to look after the interests of the child but also to support parents when problems arise.

It provides our best chance of overcoming family dysfunction.

It is my opinion that the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act is also the most likely piece of legislation which will help us achieve what the Roper Report had in mind.

The government cannot change what families do other than put support systems around them and help families find solutions.

It's a fine balance and I'm often reminded by Youth Court Judge Brown that I should not be paying families for what they should be doing anyway.

For all this it's important to remember that New Zealand has 902,140 children and young people under the age of 17 years.

Of those only approximately one per cent need major intervention from the state.

There is more we can do to positively support the rest who do a good job.

The challenge to your conference is to assess how you can best support parents within the context of the family, the community and the state.

You have gathered here to share your experience and knowledge.

We have an enormous diversity of parent support activity occurring in New Zealand.

At this conference presenters and participants include those who have researched parent support work and representatives of organisations and agencies actively involved in parent support work.

The challenge to all of you is to consider how this conference will make not only a difference to the work you do but also improve the quality of parenting in this country.

I will be most interested in any well focused and realistic recommendations that come from your deliberations. No small task.

In declaring the Parent Support Conference open, if I had a wish it would be that you come up with a strategy that will see New Zealanders value and celebrate their children through setting a specific set of goals which may establish "Pathways to Empowerment — Ara Whakamana".

There are some tough issues there. They will need hard nosed decisions in some instances. The Government can assist but the answers are with you.

Introduction to Dr Douglas Powell

Pam Kennedy
General Manager ECDU

Nga mihi nui ki a koutou e hoa ma e tumuaki ma.
Ki a tatou rangimarie ki a katoa.

I am going to be facilitating this conference overall. During this time that we have decided to spend time together I will be working with you to ensure we make the best possible use of this time and all the energy that is in this room.

I would like to briefly do three things. First all I would to talk about shells. Then I would like to refer back to a quote I used at our launch this morning from some reading that I have been doing and then I am going to introduce Dr Douglas Powell to you.

Hopefully you have started noticing shells around the hotel here since we arrived and it is not too late for those of you who haven't already to pop one in your pocket or bag.

Shells and the creatures they represent have been part of all human life for all of human life as food, medicine, as trade goods, as money, as tools, as ornaments, as art and also as sources of fun, strength, reflection, thinking and learning.
To me that epitomises what this conference is really all about.

I collect shells and don't usually buy them but I couldn't resist purchasing this nautilus one. It has a pattern on one side and the chambers are visible on the other side. You can't find anything much more beautiful epitomising the order of the universe. There is another shell on the table this long pointed one which is equally as perfect. And again I think they epitomise what hopefully we can help parenting be all about — the beauty and order of children and their development.

I would like to talk about some reading I have been doing. There is one book by an English scientist Rupert Sheldrake called "The Re-birth of Nature". He talks about knowledge gained through experience of plants and animals not being an inferior substitute for proper scientific knowledge- it's the real thing. He goes on to talk about direct experience and intellectual, intuitive and practical knowledge. That I think is useful to reflect on.

Then there is Alvin Toffler "Power Shift" that for some reason I felt would be relevant to the work we are going to be doing. He talks about power in quite a few ways. One of them is, that it implies a world which combines both chance and necessity, both chaos and order.

The third book is by Peter Block called "The Empowered Manager". This book talks about the fundamental choices for a manager between maintenance and greatness, between caution or courage and between dependency or autonomy. Thinking about it, it really applies equally well to parents who really are the world's most important managers.

Then of course there are books like "Women's Ways of Knowing" by Belinky and other authors. There is a quote from this book I really like which is "I live within myself. I know only through myself."

There are quotes from these books plus quotes from Alice Walker poems around the conference room walls. I would like to suggest people have a read of them as later on we may make use of them in another way.

And now another person I have been reading is Dr Douglas Powell. It is a real pleasure to have Dr Powell with us here today because I notice in his writing he refers to how a view of parents as children's primary or foremost teachers has dominated social reform movements with regularity since Commenius was writing in the 1600s.

I notice also that he writes of processes, of information, power-sharing and empowerment.

He is currently professor and head of Child and Family Studies at Purdue University, Indiana, American. From our perspective he has a very impressive reputation as an analyst of parent support and child education programmes.

He is also currently directing a large project on the family's contribution to children's learning.

Dr Powell is an adviser to the United States Department of Education and involved with Nation Association for the Education of Young Children. He was editor of the magazine Young Children for 6 years.

I know you will enjoy meeting with him and talking to him. Now for this session we are going to enjoy and be challenged by his address.

Creating Pathways to Empower Parents

Douglas Powell, Ph.D.
Purdue University, Indiana, USA

It is a major milestone in a society's history when bold steps are taken to address a critical and complex societal need. Today we are participants in one of those courageous steps. This conference and the efforts of the Early Childhood Development Unit to strengthen support for parents are seminal undertakings. Throughout the world, families and communities are being reshaped and stretched by far-reaching economic and social forces. The alarming result is an erosion of social capital for the proper rearing of young children.[1] New Zealand is to be commended for taking ambitious steps to bolster the building blocks upon which parents foster the healthy growth of young children.

In my remarks today, I will describe how profound changes in the social landscape of communities throughout the world have created a pressing need to substantially increase societal investment in parents of young children. I also will report what we have learned from years of research and program experiences about essential components of programs that empower parents. Lastly, I will offer some thoughts on what these lessons mean for New Zealand.

I. Supporting Parents of Young Children: Needs and Benefits

Parents and the Early Years of Development

No topic addresses the root of a society's future more directly than early childhood development. The late anthropologist Margaret Mead observed that there is no greater insight into the future than recognising when we save our children, we save ourselves.

The early years are a crucial period in forming an individual's life course. The first five years of life are marked by remarkable changes in development, and by exceptional sensitivity to critical environmental influences. Clearly, the quality of the environment in which early development occurs has long-term consequences for the individual and for society.

Families are the major source of support for a child's development, especially in the early years. No other entity exerts more influence on a child's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth than the family. The foundation of a child's future is established by the family, with parents playing a major role.

Decades of research have established a firm link between parent influences and every domain of a child's development. An infant who has formed a close

emotional attachment to a parent, for example, has a secure base from which to explore the physical and social environment. A two-year-old child who experiences rich verbal interactions with a parent and other adults has an excellent beginning in language development. Three- and four-year-old children who are read to frequently, who regularly engage in stimulating play, and who are asked questions that stimulate thinking skills have a solid foundation for cognitive and social development.

There is compelling longitudinal research evidence that mothers' child rearing practices and beliefs during the early years of a child's life are related to the child's subsequent performance in school. Children's success in school is strongly correlated with the quality of the home environment in the early years.

In view of the preponderance of evidence about the importance of parenting in the early years, we must answer the question of how well a society supports parents of young children.

Families as Vulnerable Supporters of Early Development

Even under supportive conditions, parenthood is the most difficult job in society. Imagine this newspaper advertisement for a job: "Wanted: One couple to procreate and raise a child. No experience necessary. Applicants must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and must provide food, shelter, clothing, and supervision. No training provided. No salary; applicants pay hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next 18 years. Accidental applications accepted. Single people may apply but should be prepared for twice the work."

The advertisement emphasises a basic responsibility for parenthood regarding the provision of adequate food, shelter, and protection for the child. But there are other essential tasks of parenthood during the first five years of a child's life. Children need unconditional love from a consistent and stable adult who respects the child's interests and dispositions, and invests time and emotional energy in the parent-child relationship. Children need a parent who will stimulate their intellectual growth by introducing important concepts and strengthening the child's thinking skills in ways that are appropriate to the child's developmental level. Children need a parent who provides a predictable set of daily family routines. And young children need a parent who can easily secure needed help from family, friends, and community institutions.

To successfully carry out these parenting tasks, individuals need personal resources as well as social support. Specifically,

... parents need sufficient understanding of child development in order to take the child's eye view of the world;

... parents need quality time ... time that is free from disruptions and distractions ... to interact with their young child in ways that foster an attachment relationship, extend the child's interests, and promote developmental advances;

... parents need freedom from worries about meeting basic family needs for food, shelter, clothing, and access to good health care, quality education, and competent social services;

... parents need sufficient physical and emotional strength, including good mental health, to keep up with young children's high energy levels and to create stimulating environments; and

... parents need a supportive network of friends, relatives, neighbours, and community-based programs for information, advice, a listening ear, a respite from the constant press of caring for children, emotional encouragement, positive role models, feedback on one's parenting competence, and recognition of the importance of the parenthood role.

Evidence indicates that these requisite conditions of good parenting increasingly are not being adequately met in countries throughout the world. Parents face enormous stresses and strains, due largely to sweeping demographic changes and global economic shifts. As a result, growing numbers of parents are in a vulnerable position for providing an optimal child-rearing environment. The anticipated consequences for the child, for families, and for society are negative.

Geographic mobility has reduced parents' access to conventional forms of support from extended family members and the trusted social network of longstanding friends. The weakening of strong linkages between older and younger generations threatens the traditional method of passing along cultural values and customs. One-parent family arrangements or solo parenting place extra demands on the parent and create daily needs for alternative forms of social support. Marital separation and divorce often lead to major emotional distress for children on a short- and long-term basis, resulting in problems in social behaviours and school performance. Reconstituted or blended families generally present unique difficulties for children, particularly surrounding the step parent. Work can be another source of stress. For both parents, but especially mothers, participation in the labour force can lead to problems in balancing the tensions between work and family needs. Yet without mothers' participation in the labour force, family incomes are often inadequate and women are cut off from what has become the mainstream of many societies. Poverty takes an especially devastating toll on young children, and regrettably is often associated with other high-risk conditions such as adolescent parenthood.

There is no secret about what happens to young children when parents have difficulty carrying out their child-rearing tasks. Television becomes a babysitter,

inhibiting both physical and mental activity. Parent-child interactions become strained and perhaps void of the attachments necessary for healthy development. At its worse, deficient support systems for parents can lead to child abuse and neglect. Research points to a devastating pattern of associations among parent isolation, stress, and family violence. At a minimum, children's developmental potential is compromised. Both the individual and society lose.

There is ample reason to be especially concerned about these effects among lower-income populations due to problems associated with poverty. But we must also remember there are no socioeconomic limits on inadequate parenting. Clearly, middle-class homes can be less-than-optimal child-rearing environments.

We must resist two temptations in responding to the growing concern about the adequacy of parenting today. One temptation is to interpret these patterns as the fault of disinterested or uncaring parents. In many ways, parents are victims of a rapid societal change that reduces the responsiveness and resourcefulness of many communities and institutions. Another temptation is to turn back the clock, even by three or four decades, to a simpler and less pressured way of life. But it is impossible to turn back the clock, and we must remember that earlier times had their fair share of societal problems and injustices. Rather, we must face the challenges of helping communities and families adapt to the realities of the new social landscape.

Benefits of Parent Support [2]

Research indicates there are many positive effects of parent education and support programs on the child. Studies have found short-term effects on children's intellectual competence and on school performance. Long-term program effects have been found on school-related behaviours of children. Children of parents involved in long-term parent education programs are less likely to be enrolled in special education classes. A 10-year follow-up study of one parent program found positive program effects on the incidence and severity of juvenile delinquency, child and parental attitudes toward self and the environment (problem-solving orientation), and school performance (grades, attendance).

Parent program effects also have been found on parents. Maternal behaviour has been found to improve as a result of program participation. Effects also have been found on mothers' verbal interactions with children, on child-rearing attitudes (more flexible and open), and on parents' awareness of their role as first teachers of their young child. One study of a parent education program found that participation increased fathers' sense of competence in parenting skills.

In addition, positive program effects have been found on families' economic and life circumstances. One study found that the program increased parents' feeling

of control over their lives. Another 10-year follow-up study found that mothers who had been in a comprehensive parent program were more likely to be self-supportive, have more education, and have smaller family sizes than mothers who had not been in the program.

Implicit in the findings of program effects on children and parents are benefits to society. Parents who are more self-supportive and whose children do not need special services at school are not a burden on societal resources. The well-known Perry Preschool project in the United States, which included both a pre-school and a weekly 90-minute home visit with parents, has been subjected to a cost-benefit analysis which showed a return of $5.73 for every dollar invested. The benefits focused on the costs of child care, public education, welfare, employment, and crime.[3]

The program benefits to society cannot be over-emphasised. It is the difference between paying for early prevention versus remediation. Remedial programs are by far the more costly of the two. Once again, we find support for the adage, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

I believe the strongest argument for parent support program rests with a view of society as committed to the promotion of individual and collective well-being.[4] The prevention of poor outcomes cannot be equated with the strengthening of parent or family functioning. That is, the absence of problems does not necessarily mean the presence of positive functioning. In my judgment, a well-functioning society offers educational and social programs that actively promote individual competence and a strong sense of self-efficacy rather than prevent the occurrence of problems or negative outcomes.

Summary

To summarise my remarks thus far, I submit there is a pressing need to substantially increase societal investment in parents of young children. New pathways of social support are needed for parents of all types. No society can afford to ignore the growing number of stresses and strains faced by parents today. The quality of tomorrow's world depends on the adequacy of child rearing today. More than ever before, parents of young children need and want information, recognition, and supportive personal networks. To assure a productive and humane society, we need to recognise the new realities of family life and to empower parents with information and social support.

II. Critical Steps Toward Empowering Parents through Support Programs[5]

It is not enough to say that progressive societies should provide programs of support for parents of young children. We must go the next step by defining the parameters of effective programs for parents. Resources can be used unwisely on ineffective educational and social programs when careful efforts are not

taken to incorporate proven elements of program quality. Fortunately, years of research and program experiences provide a useful set of lessons about the components or characteristics of effective programs.

Dimensions of Empowerment

It is essential that programs of support for parents begin with a firm commitment to the concept of empowerment. Genuine empowerment of parents requires programs and policies that enable families to have a tangible sense of control over their lives. This includes active decision-making about child-rearing values and practices, easy access to needed resources in the community, and meaningful participation in neighbourhood networks, community institutions, and the work setting.

Within an empowerment approach, hope and self-respect are the crux of individual competence. Empowerment strategies entail genuine opportunity for advancement and growth, respect for individual differences, and a sharing of power. Respect is reduced and dependence is fostered when programs offer opportunities without a sharing of power. This outmoded paternalistic approach has been replaced in contemporary parent support programs by collaborative relations between parents and program staff where major players have a strong voice in determining program content and methods.

The empowerment idea departs from the conventional practice of the professional serving as the helper and the parent serving as a passive helpee or client. In a conventional model of helping, the professional is viewed as resourceful and the parent is viewed as deficient or void of resources. We now know from research that empowerment models of working with people are far more effective than models that place individuals in passive and dependent roles. Parents have strengths, including vast amounts of information about their own child, that should be maximised in the content of parent support programs.

Programs that stem from an empowerment perspective are best launched with a careful examination of program assumptions and motivations. Because parent support deals with a value-laden topic, it is essential there be scrutiny of the agendas of various participants in the development of a program. In this regard in New Zealand, it is noteworthy that the basic principles of the Parent Support Projects of the Early Childhood Development Unit call for projects "to be clear about their motivation and their values in wanting to establish a project."

Responsiveness to Parent and Community Characteristics

Effective parent support programs avoid a "cookie-cutter" or uniform approach to working with parents that assumes there is one "right way" of child rearing. Rather, effective programs are dynamic systems that adapt to the needs and characteristics of the parents and communities they serve. Put simply, one program size does not fit all populations.

At the heart of program responsiveness is a stance of the program to respectfully accommodate the parent's agenda as defined by the parent. In programs exhibiting high levels of responsiveness, both parent and staff member work together to generate an understanding of the parent's interests, strengths, and needs. In contrast, programs exhibiting low levels of adaptiveness expect parents to accommodate the content and structure of the program, including assumptions about parent needs and goals as well as activities for reaching goals.

This lesson of program responsiveness has been difficult for the parent education and support field to learn. The field has been characterised by what I call a "true believer" syndrome wherein entrepreneurial developers of various program models claim loudly that they have generated the ideal program for all parents. What is more, the human and educational services have a long tradition of viewing programs as packaged "treatments" that can be applied to any population and transported to any setting.

In the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, we learned through painful experiences with Head Start and other early childhood programs that model programs cannot be duplicated. Effective programs for parents naturally adapt to fit local circumstances, and often achieve greater impacts on children when they are tailored to their contexts.

Responsiveness to cultural diversity is of central importance to parent support programs. Child rearing is a value-driven process, and programs must not impose orientations that undermine or fail to support the adaptive cultural values of a particular population. Especially needed is program sensitivity to variations within a cultural group. In the United States, for example, it is common to use the term "Hispanic" to refer to individuals of Spanish origin. Yet there is tremendous variability in the needs and interests of parents who are Hispanic. A recent study found significant differences between low-income Mexican immigrant and low-income Mexican-American mothers regarding preferred methods and content of a parent education program, for instance.[6]

Effective programs for diverse populations require more than simply extending popular program models to a given group of parents. A model program developed with a mainstream population of parents may well embrace values that are not supportive of parenting in other cultures. It may be necessary to significantly adapt or to create from scratch a program that is truly compatible with the patterns of learning and interpersonal relations among children and parents of different backgrounds.

By design, community-based programs, and not uniform model programs imposed on a community by some external source, are in the best position to be culturally responsive because they are an integral part of the community.

In New Zealand, this approach is fully recognised in the principles and practices of programs sponsored by the Early Childhood Development Unit. The first function of the Unit is community development and parent support. The guidelines and basic principles for the Unit's Parent Support Projects give clear emphasis to a community development perspective. The approach calls for a community to decide on its needs and how best to meet them, with the coordinator serving as a catalyst and not a conductor. The guidelines also recognise differences in the availability of resources for communities to organise themselves. The guidelines indicate there should be flexibility in the use of strategies toward community development. The Unit provides details on consultation practices, and specifies that the inclusion of people from local Maori communities is a matter of policy.

Attending to the Complexities of Parenting

In early childhood education, there is much interest in teaching the "whole " child. This means attending to the interrelatedness of different developmental domains, including physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. Early childhood educators argue that effective work with children cannot be dissected into separate areas of development. Intellectual competence is tied in an integral way to self-esteem, for example. A similar idea can be applied to parent support programs: We must be mindful of the interrelated complexities of parent functioning.

Parents are active thinkers. They hold a variety of beliefs about children and parenting that have direct implications for the ways in which parent support programs work with parents. Parents' beliefs have been found to relate in predicted ways to actual child-rearing practices and to children's development. For example, both mothers' and fathers' beliefs that children learn by constructing information through experience rather that rote memorisation or some other didactic method have been found to be correlated to the quality of the child's intellectual abilities. New information about children and parenting is filtered and edited by parents' existing constructs, and sometimes by the powerful messages of members of the parent's social network, such as the parent's mother.

Studies of parenting also point to the highly cognitive tasks of parenthood. In each stage of parenthood, for example, the mental work of parents is fundamental to the sense they make of their child-rearing role. For instance, consider the image-making that expectant parents pursue while anticipating the birth of a child, and the process of adjusting these images once the baby is on the scene. The task here is to reconcile the imagined baby with the real baby. Consider also the cognitive demands on parents of interpreting values and a world view to inquisitive youngsters who want to know why things work the way they do.

For programs, this means we cannot assume parents are blank slates upon which we write our expert messages. This also means that parents need considerable time in programs to discuss new information amongst themselves. This discussion time is actually a period for digesting and perhaps incorporating new perspectives on their child and parenting.

Parents' behaviours are driven by more than information about children and parenting. The quality of parent functioning is influenced by multiple factors. One set of factors deals with the psychological characteristics and resources of the parent. Partly these characteristics are an outgrowth of the parent's own childhood experiences. One of the most frequently cited findings in this regard is that parents who abuse or neglect their children are more likely to have been mistreated as a child than parents who are not abusive or neglectful. We cannot assume there is a strong causal linkage here, because many parents who were abused as children do not abuse their own children. But the evidence does suggest that one's past experiences with nurturance cannot be separated from the process of parenting.

Another set of influences on parenting deals with the sources of stress and support within the environment. Already I have addressed this matter in my remarks today. Allow me to elaborate somewhat by indicating that we should not limit our view of stress to major life events such as divorce or relocation to a new community. A recent study discovered that minor daily hassles associated with parenting ... those irritating, frustrating, annoying, and distressing demands found in everyday routines ... were a more significant source of stress on the parent-child relationship than sources of major life stress. Moreover, the study found that mothers' social support served to moderate the influence of hassles on maternal behaviour.[7]

A third set of influences on parenting behaviours is the child. Child characteristics such as temperament have been found to relate to parents' behaviours and attitudes. Interactions between parent and child are best viewed as a set of reciprocal exchanges, with each individual having influence on the other.

As further evidence of the complexities of parent functioning, please consider the findings of research on parent contributions to children's school readiness. I noted earlier in my remarks that empirical evidence shows a strong connection between the quality of early home environment and children's subsequent performance at school. Actually there are about 9 different aspects of parent behaviour and attitudes in the early years that are associated with school readiness and early school success.. These factors include discipline techniques, teaching strategies, beliefs about child development, assessments of the child's abilities, reading behaviours, and the quality of the parent-child attachment relationship. Not one of these factors is more important that the other. Each

factor is part of a larger pattern or constellation of parenting that has profound influence on how well children respond to the demands of school.

The lesson here is simple: effective programs for parents must deal with a wide range of parenting domains and issues. They must attend to the "whole" parent. And the program must provide more than information on child development and parenting. Recognition of these environmental influences on parenting has led to increased program emphasis on providing social support. The traditional parent education program assumes the dissemination of information to parents will affect behaviours and attitudes. We now know from research that it is important for programs to provide opportunities for parents to form interpersonal relationships that contribute to a parent's mutual support network.

Comprehensive Programs with Multiple Methods

Another key lesson is that the magnitude of program effects is greater when programs are intensive. Meaningful program support of parents cannot be done on the cheap. The parent-child relationship is far too complex to assume that brief encounters between a program and parents will dramatically alter or strengthen the pattern of parenting and ultimately improve child outcomes.

Findings of studies with both middle- and low-income populations support this lesson. In a review of outcome studies of 20 early childhood programs targeted at some aspect of parent functioning, it was found that more pervasive and sustained effects are likely to be realised when the program includes 11 or more contacts over at least a three-month period. A certain duration of contact is needed to permit the development of a trusting relationship between family members and program staff. The 20 programs included in this review were initiated at some time in the period from pregnancy to the first three months of the baby's life, and included a range of socioeconomic populations.[8]

Program intensity also can be viewed as the comprehensiveness or range of services a program offers. The principle here is that the more opportunities there are for families to connect to different program services, the greater the likelihood of the program having a lasting impact on patterns of parenting. Programs that involve both parent and children in major ways are far more likely to have greater impact than programs that focus primarily on the child or the parent.

It is essential for programs to recognise the value of diverse modes of parent participation in a program, and to not impose a preferred or ideal method of involvement. In my research, I have found different patterns of program participation among parents to be associated with their personal dispositions and with their life circumstances. That is, there are powerful reasons for why some parents are more talkative than other parents and for why some parents are more frequent attenders than other parents. Parents gain from a program

what they are ready and able to take. As program staff, we must appreciate the larger contexts in which parents function and we must remain flexible about the ways in which programs work with parents.

While it is important for programs to employ a range of methods in working with parents, an essential program method is the opportunity for a parent to talk with at least one other person about parenting issues. Ideally, this other person is a peer who is viewed as an equal. In a study I conducted recently on the MELD parent program of information and social support, we found strong evidence for the contribution of peer discussion groups to changes in parents' child-rearing beliefs. Over a two-year period of time, parents who received printed information about parenting and child development about twice a month in the mail did not alter their parenting beliefs, but parents who received this information within the context of a long-term peer discussion group were found to strengthen their parenting beliefs in positive ways. This pattern held for one year after the completion of the two-year program. Those who received the information in the mail only had outcomes that looked no different than parents in a control group who received neither discussion group nor printed information. This was a well-educated, highly literate population of parents who had a history of reading information on child development. I believe what is important here is the opportunity of parents to talk about their parenting experiences with a peer, and presumably this could happen within a one-to-one home visiting program as well as a discussion group.

Summary

To sum up this portion of my remarks, we have learned through research and years of program experience that the empowerment of parents requires the following program components: (1) a proactive responsiveness to parent and community characteristics, including cultural traditions and values, and an avoidance of uniform or "cookie cutter" approaches to working with parents; (2) recognition of parenting as a complex process that is shaped by multiple forces; and (3) a comprehensive approach with more than one method of working with parents and opportunity to form peer networks.

III. Acting On What We Know

I conclude my remarks with a charge to New Zealanders concerned about early childhood development and the quality of parenthood today. I sincerely hope this includes all New Zealanders. My charge is for you to act on what is already known about effective parent support programs by ensuring that all existing and new programs reflect up-to-date knowledge about best practices. My hope is that model program practices will become model or typical program practices, so that all New Zealand parents of young children are effectively supported in their child-rearing roles.

In the United States, we have an unfortunate disparity between what is known about effective practices with parents versus what is typically done to support parents. Too few programs of support for parents embody the lessons learned about exemplary practices. These are instances of programs (1) ignoring personal and contextual factors affecting parents, (2) assuming parents are blank slates, (3) attempting to implement predetermined "treatments" with diverse communities and populations, and (4) providing limited program resources for brief periods of time.

In New Zealand, the Early Childhood Development Unit provides a superb infrastructure for promoting best practices in supporting parents. The Unit is well developed conceptually and organisationally, and thus a solid foundation is in place. Further advances require the continued active involvement of parents, members of the helping professionals, the community, and civic and corporate leaders. Good parenting in the early years must be a primary concern of all members of society.

As a field, early childhood education is marked by pioneering efforts on behalf of parents. This is certainly true in New Zealand. It is my dream that as New Zealand moves ahead with its commitment to parent support, the values of innovation, persistence, and risk-taking will continue to prevail in your work with young children and their families.

Endnotes

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Parents...Parenting

Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere
Gisborne

Firstly, I believe in the Godhead, the principal parents, the ancestral source of all things.

Secondly, I greet the primeval parents of the physical world Rangi and Papa who through their very being are the exalted house of first hand experiences, learning and living.

Thirdly, I give thought to the parental placenta that nurtured and cherished me while I was in the womb of my birth mother.

Fourthly, I pay special tribute to my many parents and grandparents for their special nurturing, their preservation and transmission of traditions, history, esoteric knowledge and learning and great insights. The greatest gift they gave me was aroha — unconditional love.

The natural grandfathers and fathers, particularly, spent as much time with us their young offspring as our mothers and grandmothers. Like the women, the men could perform the nursing duties for infants with great tenderness and care. Te Iriheke my grandfather spent as much time with me as Mihomiho my grandmother, and took me with him almost everywhere he went. Those cherished years will always remain intact.

Following are two tables that give:

A a synopsis of seven passages and their matrices.

B a table that gives some insight into the type of parenting and help that I received coming from a traditional Maori background.

A KNOW FROM WHENCE YOU CAME AND WHERE YOU ARE GOING

PASSAGE	DESCRIPTION	PERIOD	MATRIX
Pre-passage	pre-natal	0-9 mths	Past: Linked in with the Godhead Now: Womb New: Mother
1st	Infancy	0-4 yrs	Past: Womb Now: Mother/other adults/children New: Earth... environment
2nd	Childhood	4-8 yrs	Past: Mother on a constant basis Now: Extended family New: Self with peers
3rd	Pubescent	8-12 yrs	Past: Extended family on a constant basis Now: Self and peers New: Vulnerable self
4th	Adolescent	12-21 yrs	Past: Old self and peers Now: Vulnerable self New: New contacts and interests
5th	Wo/manhood	21-35 yrs	Past: Vulnerable self Now: New and steady relationships New: Family, reinforcing heritage
6th	Mid-life	35-56 yrs	Past: Steady relationships, outside interest Now: Family, reinforcing heritage New: Greater awareness of spirituality
7th	New Age	56+	Past: Family ties on a constant basis Now: Greater awareness of spirituality

B PARENTING.... WHO? WHAT? HOW?

PASSAGE	HELPERS IN PARENTING	HOW THEY HELP
Infancy	Tribal mothers and fathers	Building healthy bodies, matrices and bonding
Childhood	Tribal grandmothers and grandfathers	Structuring and modelling so that the children see the adults action and demonstrate qualities of life that are important to the total development of the child, empowerment through developing her/him personally emotionally, socially, culturally, spiritually, physically, ethically and intellectually.
Pubescent	Urban grouping and network eg Kohanga Reo Whanau	
Adolescent	Tribal or chosen mentors Tribal brothers and sisters, other peers, teachers.	
Wo/man hood	Positive marriage partner	Partnership role, building on each others strengths through caring and love.
Mid Life	Interest groups eg marae committee, church guilds etc	Through keeping a balance between individual and group endeavour. Able to control and guide behaviour through the conscious self among others.
New Life	Tribal brothers and sisters Tribal daughters and sons Tribal granddaughters and grandsons or other similar structures.	Through celebrating your life's experiences and acquired skills through learning from your expertise, and you learning to keep up with each generation through positive communication. Being in touch with the universal consciousness.

Plunket in the Nineties

Gill Cleland & Helen Corrigan
Wellington Plunket

The Plunket Society of New Zealand came into being in 1907 and, initially, was due entirely to the enthusiasm of Dr. Truby King. He had begun a campaign against the high infant mortality rate (73 deaths in every 1000 babies) through advocating breast feeding, improved methods of artificial feeding and the principles of good mothercraft. His slogan was 'Support the mothers and save the babies'.

Today we still want to support the mothers and save the babies but that role has broadened. Every parent brings to the job of parenting all sorts of experiences and preconceived ideas. To these will be added the often conflicting advice from books, doctors, midwives, Plunket nurses, mothers, mothers-in-law and neighbours and friends.

From this barrage of information parents must select the ideas that fit best with their concept of parenting — and there must be hundreds of good ways to parent. Preparing for parenting begins early. We have probably all heard our preschooler talking to his/her teddy bear. Already the patterns are being set.

To help parents negotiate this mine field Plunket nurses, working with parents from the community, try to deliver a service that is appropriate to the area. We work in Karori. Our area is mostly middleclass and mainly European although we have clients from both ends of the economic spectrum. Over the last five years this service has changed considerably.

The Changing Role Of Plunket

In 1985 Plunket Nurses delivered their service to their clients in one to one consultations either at home or in the Plunket clinics. For the first six weeks this involved a weekly home visit, then visits became fortnightly until three months. At this time the client was seen in the clinic, monthly until six months and then six weekly until the first year. If there were any special needs more visits were readily available. After one year the toddler was seen three monthly until two years and then six monthly until school with a free doctor's check at three years. The schedule allowed for a maximum of twenty-five visits for each child. A Plunket nurse's full time case load was between 150-160 babies under twelve months but this varied from area to area and from city to rural areas. During these consultations information on health, development and safety was discussed . Plunket mothers' social groups existed in the community and were run by the Plunket Committee.

The Public Health involvement with all under fives in the Wellington area stopped about five years ago. This included their involvement with the pre-schools and creches. From this time Plunket became responsible for Health checks in all pre-school children. The Health check for five year olds starting school now only takes place if requested by the parent or the teacher.

Government Contract 1992

The 1992 Government contract with the Plunket Society provides for nine individual consultations for each child from birth to five years. In addition eight hours of post-natal parental education is to be available for first time parents. As an example of the increased work load that Plunket Nurses are experiencing the case load per full time nurse has risen from 160 babies under a year old in 1985 to 240 in 1991. This also varies from area to area and from year to year. With the latest cutbacks in staffing this case load will rise to 270 babies under a year old in 1993. Under the new contract there are also 24,000 visits available nationwide to be used for priority families at the nurses' discretion.

Group Education

This increase has forced a change in emphasis from one to one consultations with clients to group education. Many mothers work right up until the time of birth and feel very isolated at home with little contact with neighbours. It became apparent the clients wanted early contact with other first time mothers living in their area. Because of this and the reduced contact time with nurses we devised a series of talks for the parents covering topics relating to care of young babies.

Working with local midwives we meet parents antenatally to introduce the Plunket services. At this stage parents-to-be are focussed on the birth and find it difficult to absorb too much information about caring for their baby. (Meeting the Plunket Nurse at this stage is important and reassuring to the mother.) The inability to focus on postnatal education means that many parents are unprepared for general baby care. (This inability to focus on post natal care is a natural protection against stillbirth, premature delivery, birth defects etc). Once the baby is born the parents are very receptive to any information which will help them in the care of their baby. The home visits focus on breast feeding, no smoking in the home, sleep position and temperature control. These topics arise naturally while the nurse is in the home.

Our group talks carry on from the individual to the more general topics. These group sessions are attracting mothers with babies as young as two weeks old. It became apparent that mothers were enthusiastic and receptive at a much earlier age than we had anticipated. We have found that this level of interest remains high until the child is about six months old and well integrated into the family. By this stage most parents have built up a support network with other parents

attending the talks and have often set up their own play groups. Originally we divided the talks into two groups — birth to six months and six months to fifteen months.

The feedback from parents has led us to rethink our talks for next year. Another influence will be the cut backs in nursing hours. We hope that next year we will run an on-going series of talks, discussions and videos every Wednesday afternoon so that mothers have ready access to Plunket Nurses and other Health professionals.

Parents want high quality, relevant, up-to-date information and will not attend sessions of a poor standard. They desire options so that they can make decisions best suited to their family philosophy.

Once the child becomes mobile a new series of challenges occur: safety, discipline, sleep problems and recognising childhood illnesses. We cover these topics in a series of talks and videos. Seasonal topics are also popular, eg. Chemist on sunblocks, Water safety Council Officer, poisonous plants found in most gardens.

For parents with children eighteen months and older a Toddler health Course has been developed. The one in Karori is voluntarily coordinated by a Plunket mother, Sue Sutherland, a registered nurse. She developed a programme after discussions with the mothers and it proved very popular. Whenever possible we use Health professionals who are parents living or working in Karori. A major strength of Plunket is that volunteers from the area work with the nurse.

Venues

Because Karori is very diverse both socially and economically we hold our videos and discussions in the Karori Plunket Rooms. Recently, at pre-school checks, we have been showing videos on Glue Ear, Asthma and play and development. (Kindergartens, Playcentres, creches, and Kohanga Reo.)
For mothers reluctant to attend the talks the nurses are able to make additional home or clinic visits.

Clinics in pre-schools have a team approach. This team includes a dietitian, speech therapist, doctor, hearing tester, and (until recently) a dental nurse. Pamphlets are made available to parents on a wide range of topics.

Analysis of Parents using Group Education

In 1991-92 81% of first time parents attended one or more talks in Karori. Of the 19% of non-attenders 12 were Asian mothers, 2 were university students whose parents were care givers and one was a young European woman whose parents lived close to her. Fathers attended whenever possible.

It is obvious that evening talks which could include working mothers and interested fathers are necessary. The Parents As First Teacher Programme at present being trialled in other parts of New Zealand would be very valuable for parents uncomfortable with group sessions.

Karitane Family Units also provide talks and discussion groups. Often these are organised for special groups, eg. Cambodians, thirty-plus mothers and teenage mothers.

We are presently working with the Karori Community Coordinator to set up a support group for fathers.

Conclusion

Our aim in Karori has been to encourage parents to establish their own support systems and to provide them with good quality information so they can enjoy, to the full, their children. It is significant that a former British Minister of Health stated, "Access to information is power" — and we want to empower parents so that they can evaluate their performance as parents and enjoy raising their children.

A Community Based Approach to Parent Support

Jan Gerritsen
Hamilton City Council

The Parent Support and Education Pilot Projects established by the then Department of Education were the forerunners of the Parent Support schemes currently run by the Early Childhood Development Unit staff in communities throughout New Zealand.

The pilots aimed to reach parents of young children not currently linked to any early childhood service and to assist them to evolve community based parent support and education networks for their mutual support and growth. Fundamental to the project was the expectation that the projects would evolve within a community framework in response to local consultation.

These projects were established in areas where there was a known need for additional early childhood services, often with a high concentration of young families, or social disruption caused by major construction projects winding down.

The pilots are still of interest for the range of programmes which were generated to reflect the range of needs and the personnel involved.

The workers in the pilot projects located five major groups of parent which could be viewed as developmental hierarchy: the parent already connected with an early childhood service; the parent who needed information and little support to use an early childhood service; the parent who needed a small locally based service prior to joining an early childhood service; the parent who needed individual support prior to being connected with other parents; the parent who didn't want to continue contact.

Background to Projects

The purpose of the pilot projects was to reach the parents not currently linked with any organisation and to provide those parents with a listening ear, information about local services and encouragement to use them, practical help in extending parenting skills, opportunities to meet other parents and any extra or specialised attention for the children.

The principles which guided these projects are of crucial importance:
To accept the parents without judgement, recognising them as the experts on their children.

For parents to communicate their needs and be encouraged to be responsible for meeting them.
To foster the parents' self esteem and self confidence.
To reinforce and encourage parent-child activities.
To encourage the exchange of resources among neighbouring families.

The projects tended to follow three phases; consultation, establishment and implementation.

The Consultation Phase

The first stage was to consult the community. Consultation ranged from public meetings, contacting key Government staff, to direct contact with parents in the area.

This stage is especially important for staff new to a community where other professionals and community leaders have been involved for some time. Consultation can gain supporters and even additional resources from other agencies. Initial suspicion may occur especially where other grand schemes had come to nothing.

Two of the projects were initiated with public meetings which attracted professionals and leaders of community groups.
People were initially confused and even cynical at the lack of direction provided by staff seeking ideas about how best to work in the local community. Some professionals were clear about the failings of parents in their area but were less clear of how to bring about the desired changes. They may have difficulties with a non-judgmental approach. It proved necessary to have a further meeting within two weeks for people to have time to go away to think about and discuss any options.

The people who continued to meet for consultation became members of the Advisory Groups which provided ideas about the most effective ways to operate the project and provided ongoing support and evaluation.

In another area the Education Department staff consulted key government departments individually about appointing an Early Childhood Community Worker who then visited parents in their homes.

In one area where a study had already been carried out among the professionals about the needs and a Community Preschool Worker had been employed, a Parent Support Worker visited families in their homes and then called a meeting of the parents to find out what they wanted in their community.

Consultation with key government staff, other professionals and leaders from the community confirmed the need, provided information on appropriate responses and often gained practical support for the project, while direct contact

with parents themselves gave them the opportunity to decide what form of support they would like.

The Establishment and Implementation Phases

Services Developed

As a result of consultation a number of different responses were developed each with their own advantages and disadvantages. Community Directories were developed, toy and adult libraries were established, community courses were run, and to contact the parents home visitors, playgroup leaders or neighbourhood leaders were appointed.

Community Directories

In most projects a lack of knowledge about support services available to parents in the area was identified and attention focussed on a Community Directory. In one area gathering the information gave the newly formed Citizens Advice Bureau a profile in the area and identified gaps in service.

The range of services available in the areas were a source of surprise for some and the Community Directories were an important resource for the workers in each of the projects and also were a source of potential speakers to parent groups. Community Directories are expensive to produce, required careful editing and proof reading and took much longer than envisaged.

In one area the local Lions group took over the subsequent editions of the Directory.

Resource Libraries

A toy library was established in the local library as a result of the parents' interest in having play materials in their own homes. In one area a resource library of parent education books was established.

Community Leadership Training

Support groups in the community were offered a training course to extend their abilities to respond to parents of young families and a Positive Parenting Course was held for parents in the community.

Parent Contact People

In all the projects it was felt necessary to make direct contact with the target groups of parents. Most workers approached all the parents in a geographical area rather than be seen to single out individual parents. This approach was consistent with the requirement to be non-judgmental. As one worker said, 'All parents with pre-school children need support'.

Home Visitors

In two areas Education staff felt that more was needed to contact the many parents and decided a Parent Support Worker was the most effective way of contacting parents not attending any service. The positions were offered to women who had shown considerable interest and enthusiasm for the project, who were involved in a number of community groups, and supported by other professionals working in the area.

The Home Visitor visited parents who did not belong to the Playcentre, Kindergarten, or Kohanga Reo except where houses were in a confined area such as a cul de sac. The Home Visitor contacted people in their own homes bringing equipment for children's play. Play materials such as puzzles, paper, paints, and books were left with families and the home visitor returned regularly to exchange the equipment. This made her a welcome visitor. The home visitor encouraged interested families to early childhood services by accompanying them on their initial visits and identifying transport from other parents attending. Some families were encouraged to form playgroups among themselves but these did not always eventuate. Many families did not want to join groups and preferred to be visited in their own homes.

Playgroup Leaders

The families approached by door to door contact were invited to a meeting to discuss how their needs could be met. This suburb had no early childhood service, the nearest being in neighbouring suburbs. The parents elected to meet weekly alternating a playgroup with speakers and craft activities so that they had stimulation for themselves.

Neighbourhood Leaders

One project developed the concept of neighbourhood workers, called parent support workers, whose role was to contact parents in their immediate neighbourhoods to find what they wanted. The Advisory Group which formed out of the public meetings identified potential workers who were invited to hear about the project, were provided with pre-service training and employed for four and a half hours a week. Eleven workers knocked on doors in their streets and after holding meetings with parents most formed neighbourhood groups offering combinations of speakers, craft activities, coffee mornings and playgroups. Parents expressed interest in health issues for themselves and their children, activities with their children, and finding out about community service groups such as budget advice and parent service groups.

Needs of Parents

The wide range of parents contacted through the projects varied in the needs they expressed. While the focus of the project from the Education Department's point of view was on enhancing parenting skills it seemed that the parents themselves did not always rate this so highly. They wanted to be stimulated, to

get to know other people, to learn new skills. It seems clear that parenting projects need to focus on the 'whole' parent not just the parenting role.

Some parents needed only to have information, an introductory visit and to have access to transport to be connected to an early childhood service.

Home visiting focussed on families not connected with early childhood services. Parents visited in their own homes wanted to know about providing for their children's play, required help identifying and negotiating government departments and services and some needed personal support. Exchanging equipment for the children's play seemed to be a non-threatening way to maintain contact and trust with families who quickly used the visitors for personal support on problem issues. The home visiting model supported parents to provide for their children's learning through play using both exchanged equipment and household items and natural materials. Parents reported an interest in their children's learning and an appreciation of the importance of the pre-school years. Some parents did not want to belong to groups through shyness, independence, lack of time and personal difficulties.

Projects which formed groups met a need for parents to get out of their houses, meet with their neighbours and learn about matters which interested them. They expressed an interest in knowing about community services, understanding health, parenting skills and child management. A number of parents spoke of the need to be stimulated. As a result many groups struck a balance between parenting information, craft skills and children's play. Through speakers they became aware of community resources, learned new craft activities, and gained new ideas about activities for their children.

Some women wanted opportunities to get to know other mothers and their neighbours and as a result neighbourhood networks developed, many mixing socially between group sessions. They provided personal support for each other but two groups reported that it took up to six months before they felt fully relaxed with each other. Some of the women in these groups were very shy and it had been an effort for them to come but they continued to be regular attenders.

Most children in groups were on waiting lists for early childhood services. Some parents needed support to be linked to services and many used the workers for discussions about problems over the telephone or visiting them in their homes.

The parents were aware of others in their neighbourhood who were isolated but were unable to persuade them to come to the group.

Some of the parents who came to groups did not think they would want to be visited in their own homes.

Community Services

In addition Positive Parenting courses were offered to the workers, parents in groups or the wider community. Many workers felt that the course was too long for the parents they worked with but used the ideas from it as they were appropriate to the concerns expressed.

A toy library set up in the local library continued after the project closed and was well used by all the families in the area and attracted new borrowers to the library.

Support for Workers

Supporting parents required a considerable range of skills and knowledge of community resources. Dealing with families with a range of needs can be upsetting and support systems needed to be in place so that the workers could deal effectively with the families' needs and with their own stress as it arose.

Training

Training for workers was important with workers expressing appreciation of communications courses, especially listening skills. Cultural awareness courses were appreciated for the increased sensitivity they brought. Most workers trained to lead Positive Parenting Courses.

Managerial and Professional Support

The workers had professional and managerial support through the Early Childhood Education officers. This enabled them to talk through processes used, share problems with families and progress towards achieving the objectives. One project contracted a supervisor to provide the workers with group supervision sessions. These sessions were valuable for mutual support among the workers and for addressing the issues which arose for workers in their role as parent supporters.

Issues which can arise in parent support work include parents on drugs, child abuse, violence in the home, putting boundaries around availability, judgmental attitudes, working with parents who don't comply with advice, or fail to address special needs of their child. These issues all raise dilemmas for parent workers and they need the opportunity to clarify their roles and responsibilities and to work through associated stresses. Group supervision session with a contracted supervisor indicated that workers need training about the purpose of supervision and how to make best use of it.

Advisory groups made up of professional workers in the community and some leaders of community groups provided managerial support for the continuation of the project and provided a community link for the Early Childhood Education Officer. Individuals in the group were support people for the workers.

Administrative support was important to ensure an adequate supply of publicity materials, play equipment, tea and coffee. Establishing efficient procedures for prompt reimbursement of expenses proved a problem in all areas.

Completion of Projects

The completion of the projects was a response to the time frames set by changes in the Department of Education rather than the needs of the families, although the workers worked hard to provide alternatives to ensure families were not left unsupported. Ideally completion of the project should be in response to achievement of objectives.

Conclusion

The Parent Support and Education Project offered a range of models for providing support for parents who are not involved in early childhood services. In general projects which incorporated community consultation and involvement took longer to become established but they met a community education and networking function.

Models which developed groups tended to attract parents with sufficient confidence to join groups and were successful in attracting both isolated and more active parents although some isolated parents in the community did not become involved. The groups were able to operate independently for a period once the project wound down.

The home visiting models were very successful in reaching the target parents. The workers were valued by the parents as someone who cared about them and supported them to work through some of their problems. Some of these parents developed enough confidence to join other groups, many were put in touch with other support services, but some may have felt unsupported once the project ceased despite the workers' concern that parents had access to support.

Support for the workers responsible for working with parents is essential. Administrative procedures need to be clear and ensure that reimbursement of expenses is prompt. Personal, professional support is necessary for the ongoing effectiveness of workers working in stressful and challenging situations.

The projects demonstrated that families appreciate support in learning more about parenting and providing for their children's play and learning. At the same time parents also wish to be stimulated with information and skills broader than those focussing on parenting. Some parents responded readily to the opportunity to join with other parents, others appreciated being visited in their own homes and supported on an individual basis. Parents spoken to were enthusiastic about the project and what they had gained from it.

Future Projects

The initial proposal to work from a community development perspective provided a sound base for the future of parent support projects. Not only did it put the clients in charge of what happened to them but it also provided a basis for sharing of resources and ensuring the ongoing effectiveness of projects.

Community Links

In most cities and many towns there are community houses which are usually 'owned' by the community to address community issues. Many of them operate play groups, parent groups and adult education. They are also good places to advertise community activities.

For instance at one Community House in Hamilton there is a play group, a Tongan Society pre-school group, a whanau group and a creche for children of parents at classes. There are adult education classes run through the night class system which include personal and skill development such as dealing with stress or hairdressing. The house runs a vegetable co-operative which has 70 families and a gardening support project. Another house ran a basic cooking class on how to cook some of the less familiar vegetables which were bought by the vegetable co-operative.

Pre-school workers moving into suburbs to support parent support would be wise to make contact with the community house to develop a co-operative rather than a competitive approach. Houses would be quick to admit that there are many families in the area who do not use the house and welcome other attempts to reach such people.

Some of the pilot projects identified the need for a community house in the area to act as a community base from which a number of support services could operate. The local authority may be able to assist with such a project either financially, with a property or with staff who can assist with the project.

Community development staff in local authorities may be able to support parent support projects. Certainly in one of the pilot projects the community development adviser was a very major player in identifying potential support people, providing training and identifying issues that needed to be addressed to ensure the success of the project.

As health issues were a major interest for parents, linking parents with health development staff and Plunket nurses was valuable and health staff welcomed the opportunity to make contact with families.

Summary

Parent support projects are not just about supporting mothers to be better parents. They can also serve to contribute to the personal development of

parents, develop leadership skills, strengthen neighbourhood cohesion, encourage supportive communities and enhance access to services.

Working in a consultative and co-operative way with other services and community groups may take more staff time but the advantages are a better use of time and financial resources, professional support for staff, more support for the project, a broader focus on the project and ultimately a better service to parents.

Support for Parents of Children with Special Needs

Denise Gibbard NZCCS
&
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"For some parents it begins the day their child is born. For others there are weeks, months, even years of foreboding — knowing but not knowing that something is wrong. At some point it is confirmed by a doctor; your child is not the perfect baby you expected. Then the struggle to cope begins."
(Simons, P5, 1987).

There has been much research and written information produced on the characteristic initial reactions, emotions and defences of parents at the time of finding out that their child has a disability. The dreams of a child who is perfect, beautiful, successful, all the things that parents may have liked to have been themselves are dashed, as parents begin to learn to accept that the child they have is not the child they wanted. They have the mechanisms to cope. These parents are ordinary people caught in an extraordinary situation and need straightforward, informative, honest and ongoing support.

The ability (and encouragement) to mourn the loss of the healthy baby, the idealised, fantasised child from the day of diagnosis is the first forward step in the beginning of an acceptance of the situation. Initial fears of inability to cope and fears for the future are part of the concept of ongoing loss. Loss of individuality and personal time as the parent becomes more and more involved with the day to day management of the child, the loss of time with other members of the family and friends, loss of money that had been set aside for other reachable dreams, loss of the ability to fully participate in the diverse range of recreational and social activities that are part of 'normal' family life.

Most parents quickly begin to search for information and answers that will enable them to cope, possibly even make the problem go away by, for example, looking for cures:-

- "I read an article in a magazine about a child with exactly the same thing as Millie, this special diet cured the child."

- "I want to do everything I can for her. give me some specific exercises for Millie, maybe we can solve her problems."

- Bargaining: "She's so little, why didn't God make me blind instead of her."

- Anger: - with grandparents for being insensitive
  - with each other for not solving the problem
  - at the unfairness of the situation

The searching for 'out' is normal, but there comes a time when the need for acceptance of the child for who the child is, and not in spite of enables her to be fully integrated into the family's life and therefore begin to develop her full potential.

The search for cause and the quite often unanswerable; "why did this happen to me" is an understandable attempt to cope with guilt feelings and it is important to stress and explain the physical cause of the disability when it is known (eg. unavoidable inadvisable genetic cause; Down's Syndrome, Spina Bifida or through external elements such as Rubella etc.) Guilt over the possibility of causing the child's condition is using energy that could otherwise be channelled into more constructive actions:-

- "She was under too much stress in her job, I should have made her quit earlier."

- "I should have stopped smoking while I was pregnant."

- "If only we had done such and such..."

and even:

- "If only she would die, at least we could get on and live a normal life again."

Parents for whom knowledge about their child's disability is a long, drawn out dawning that is finally confirmed, may experience different emotions. Initial concerns by parents over what future may be facing the child now definitely appear bleak, and depression can be the result. No-one can predict what will happen in the future of the child, we can only take one day at a time as it comes.

For parents in this position the most frustrating sentence that they can hear is "give it some time, wait a while and see what happens, come back in three months, but here's a pamphlet on....."

Parents want answers and information and they want it now. Even if they cannot be given a specific diagnosis, cannot be assured that in a year or so, their child may begin to speak or be toilet-trained, any positive support, ideas for enhancing development, just knowing that they are being listened to and their concerns are being taken seriously is a step in the right direction. The old saying "No news is good news," does not work here. Parents should not be made to feel guilty for asking for or receiving help.

Support for all parents is needed that provides practical assistance and objective information that will help parents in the day to day management surrounding the care of the child and the accessing and co-ordinating of multiple resources, funding mechanisms and service providers for the child. In providing this support it is essential to constantly regard the child as a total individual who functions with a family and community unit and what may be beneficial for the health and wellbeing of the child with a disability may not necessarily always fit with the needs of all family members.

Finding professionals they can trust, friends and family with whom they can talk, joining parent support groups with other parents who share common situations and concerns helps the parents begin to feel in control, raising self esteem and improving psychological health. The acceptance of the child for who she is instead of focusing on the flaw can take place. The handicap is secondary to the child.

The family presented in the original scenario come to you with concerns for their daughters future.

Question: What issues should you be keeping in mind in terms of your approach?

Scenario:

Millie will be 2 years old soon. Her mother, Nan and father, Howard have just had confirmation from the paediatrician at the local hospital that all is not well with her development. Millie has been given a non-specific diagnosis of General Development Delay.

She sits by herself unaided, but as yet shows no signs of mobility either through crawling or pulling herself up. Millie cries a lot. The possibility of epilepsy is being discussed and she is due to have an EEG in a weeks time. She communicates her likes and dislikes through gestures (eg. pointing, smiles, screaming in rage), but as yet has no verbal language skills.

It has also been confirmed that Millie has a visual impairment, but it's difficult at this stage to ascertain how much sight she has. Millie blinks a lot. A recent assessment by the Early Intervention Team has found that Millie has delay in all areas of her development (cognitive, social, fine motor, gross motor, communication and self care) of between 6 and 12 months.

Nan and Howard have each individually had their own concerns about Millie, but have never discussed them. She was a fragile little girl, not like her two boisterous siblings Josh (5) and Mark (7). Friends and family have always put Millie's slow development down to the fact that she was spoilt by all of the attention lavished on her by two adoring brothers, "she doesn't need to do anything for herself."

The family lives in rental accommodation. Howard, a NZ Maori, has a good job, but times are still tight. They've been saving for their own house, but more and more they're having to dip into their savings to pay for medical and specialist bills, and now there's the prospect of Millie's needing prescription glasses.

Issues of Adjustment

"He sees his wife talking to friends and resents the fact that she can do that and he can't. Resents the fact that she gets the sympathy, support and attention as though it weren't his kid, his problem too. He can't talk to his wife; talking would give reality to his feelings and they're too ugly to express. Besides, he's too angry to talk, and he doesn't want to hurt her. So hating his feelings, he goes off to work where he can be normal.

In today's society it is still the mother who is the predominant caregiver of the infant child in the home, and this is by no means different for the mother of the child with special developmental needs. As a consequence it is the mother and child who are the focus of attention in the early stages of diagnosis. It is the mother, quite often, who takes the child to hospital and specialist visits, for tests and therapy sessions therefore she is the one receiving constant information and feedback from assessments. This continual flow of information enables her to be constantly re-assessing and digesting the reality of the situation and has the opportunity to discuss any concerns she may have with the professional directly involved.

The husband on the other hand must usually bow to the demands of his employment and so is not always free to accompany his partner on these visits. He must rely on her interpretation, her emphasis on information she has gathered first hand or maybe tries to shield him from the truth. Just as today's society deems that it shall be the woman who stays home to care for the child, it still also discourages men from expressing emotions and feelings, they need to be able to keep up the "front".

"I felt our life was in danger of collapsing and it was up to me to keep it together." "In the early days, I felt my husband didn't care, he just wouldn't talk to me about it at all. Later I found that he was deeply touched and we both wished that he could have explained it to me." (Whaite & Ellis, P3 1987).

Two heads are better than one. Marital stress is eventual at some stage in the life of any two people bringing up a family, however the extra stress involved in the adjustments made to integrate the child with a disability into the family unit doubles the impact. The channels of communication must remain open, traditional boundaries need to come down. Responsibilities such as domestic chores or relief from childcare responsibilities altogether while the other partner has some time for his/herself is essential. The relaying of accurate information so that each partner has the full facts means that neither will suffer delusions about the actual condition of the child. Parents can then support each other emotionally and come to terms with their feelings openly with someone they truly trust.

Admitting that you need help, is one of the hardest things to do. Marriage guidance counsellors are frequently able to help couples achieve open communication and learn to express their feelings by forcing themselves to look inside, to examine the most painful feelings and to share them.

"Children have a right to their thoughts and feelings and all you can do is acknowledge these as they arise." (Whaite & Ellis, P56, 1987)

Children's imaginations can run riot with distorted conclusions about his/her sibling, so different from anyone else's brother or sister (younger or older).

Children need factual information exactly the same as adults. Although they might not want to listen to it right now, that information needs to be available for when they are ready. They also need to be able to express their feelings freely — anger, accepting differences, jealousy, embarrassment, pride, worry, love.

- "Sometimes I just want to pretend that she's not my sister and go into town with Mum alone."
- "My Aunty says that Millie and I look so alike, maybe there's something wrong with me too."
- "I've been teaching her how to roll a ball back to me and she's pretty well got it now."

Siblings are wonderful role models for children with disabilities. It is a fine line we tread between giving siblings tasks in terms of the care and ongoing development of the child with a disability, and over-burdening them with too

heavy responsibilities. Set routine tasks that are regularly swapped and changed along with parental admiration and encouragement will help siblings feelings of being an important part of the family unit and team in the care and development of the brother/sister with a disability.

Grandparents have a difficult time accepting a disability also. Removed from the reality of the situation their grief is double in that not only are the dreams of that fantasised grandchild upset, but they also grieve for the loss that their own child has suffered. Unlike the parents, grandparents do not handle, love and share the small successes of the child everyday. They see the child less often. This lack of intense bondage means that, for grandparents the process is longer.

Grandparents need and want information too. Education through providing them with helpful literature, similar to that given to parents can help them overcome initial fear and ignorance of the child's condition. Their efforts to provide support may appear to border on interference. Their well-intentioned advise and help is an excellent source of extended family support, however, educating grandparents is an ongoing task. Everybody needs to learn.

Question: What sort of support might the family in the original scenario be given as they face periods of acceptance (or non-acceptance)?

Question: What adjustments will the family need to make now Millie's disability is a reality?

Family Support

We want to look now at where and how support might be best offered for a family with a child with special needs.

"The most important thing that happens when a child is born with disabilities is that a child is born. The most important thing that happens when a couple become parents of a child with a disability is that the couple become parents."
Fergusson and Asch (1989)

The most important focus of any intervention in the name of Family Support should be the enhancing of the confidence and competence of the family to be a whole and healthy family.

Issues for the child cannot be seen in isolation from those of the family unit in which the child grows. To do so would be as unwise and limiting as to focus on the child's disabilities in isolation from her strengths as well.

There are some ways in which our support to these parents can best be offered:

Information is Power

When we first meet families like Millie's, we have a strong impression that it must be very hard, and they have a long list of unknowns. All too common is the claim by parents that when they approach professionals for assistance, they are treated as if they are emotionally fragile and ignorant, and they often feel as if professionals are "holding out" on them.

So, as a professional, learn to treat information like a hot potato ... pass it on! Families can then sift through what has most meaning for them and plot their own course, balancing the whole family's needs.

For some families, the early years are a time when Information is the only support they want. While action is what we may want as the professional, families may choose instead to cogitate, and consolidate, as the family adjusts.

Cultural Definitions

Our own cultures give us a framework for understanding what goes on around us. Different cultural groups perceive disability differently eg as a source of shame or of evil.

Different cultures also perceive "family" differently. Each brings with them different rules of membership — inclusion of extended family members, or of people not necessarily related by blood-ties.

Each culture also follows different rules regarding the way the family operates ie, its protocols - eg how decisions are made, and by whom. Whether religious leaders are consulted. And what subjects can be talked about openly.

It becomes crucial that as a caregiver, we find out from the family whom they determine to be "family". This will vary for families from Cambodia, Rarotonga, or whether they are NZ Pakeha or Maori. Once the membership is sorted out, then we must identify acceptable ways of working with them, eg by liaising through an intermediary.

How we offer support to families is often at least as important as what we offer.

Financial Matters

Money isn't everything, but it sure helps pave the way, and gives ACCESS. Many studies have confirmed that families of children with disabilities face financial demands beyond those arising from simply having a young child.

These can come directly or indirectly. Costs arising directly from the disability vary, eg specialist treatments, aids and alterations. Increased costs can also arise indirectly ... eg having to pay for child-minding if the natural networks such as family, neighbours and friends are unwilling or unable to help; having to transport the child to many more places often further distances from home.

There are sources of financial support available however, through a variety of benefits and allowances, eg Handicapped Child's Allowance, childcare subsidies, grants for housing alterations or equipment. Informing parents about their entitlements can be enormously helpful.

Relationships

As has been pointed out earlier, the birth of a child who is different requires considerable adjustment. While this is going on, this impacts on all individual members of the family. This must be acknowledged when looking at each members contribution, eg the grandma who is hesitant to offer support to her daughter because this is not the grandchild she's been dreaming about.

As has been mentioned earlier, siblings are often forgotten, but are strong sources of advocacy and support for their sister or brother, and of support for other family members, but they are still children themselves. Parents must juggle these demands.

QUESTIONS:

What signals do we have for the family illustrated above about how they could be supported?

What sort of support might they welcome at this stage?

ATTITUDES

When we consider Millie and her family, we make observations about them, and about how we as caregivers might fit in with their lives. But it is not just facts and professional training that influence our perceptions. What we believe about children with disabilities and their families affects what we say and do when we are with them. So now I would like us to consider our attitudes and values, as these are fundamental to everything else we do.

There are some commonly held beliefs about people with disabilities, beliefs which have their roots in our own past, but which linger to this day.

a) There is the belief that people with disabilities are sick.

Believing that disability is a sickness has led to some powerful and persistent methods of service delivery ie in hospitals.

Such a belief leads to a desire to isolate the child from others, eg for Millie to be kept away from other children.

Such a belief can suggest further that the family and those in contact with the child are also contaminated. Many young parents of children with special needs report a loss of contact with some of their friends, too uncomfortable to pop by with their own healthy toddlers.

Believing such children are sick results in an expectation that only specialists and people with "special" skills can be with these children. Therefore, ordinary parenting skills are suddenly worthless, ordinary activities like picnics and playgrounds suddenly inadequate, and parents are relegated to child-minders as their homes become the venue for multidisciplinary meetings filled with professionals. Suggestions are made by professionals that parents might like to attend a behaviour management course about raising children, or suggestions they might move to another town so their child can attend a special centre.

This attitude that disability is an evil sickness leads to a pervasive style based on "out of sight - out of mind", eg that if Mum keeps Millie at home, its not your problem anymore.

In reverse, a belief in acceptance of difference as hallmark of the maturity of our civilization means that children will be visible, will be alongside us.

b) There is a historical view that people with disabilities are somehow sub-human, that a defect negates their human rights.

Basically this describes a belief that these children are objects, not subjects. As such, this attitude legitimizes all sorts of treatment towards them deemed acceptable for animals. Treatments based on a belief that they are insensitive to heat, cold, pain. It has led to children being locked in substandard places like cages. It has led to people being labelled by diagnostic category rather than name.

Because they are regarded as not being quite human, such children are also regarded as not having quite the same emotional experiences as us. That we have had to conduct research to "prove" that these children experience their world emotionally as do the rest of us, illustrates the depth of this attitude. Yet in 1992, there is still a widely held belief that these children do not "need" a family quite as much as normal children, and that they do not feel the pain of exclusion and rejection as intensely.

For the families, this is often experienced as being on public show, and having loss of privacy as their relationships are questioned by strangers, and personal information is bandied around, as if the whole family were in a glass specimen jar.

Such historical attitudes we know still exist in varying degrees. Parents very quickly experience them in daily life, and that bitter discovery affects how they then interact with everyone in return. Conversely, if we as professionals signal our attitudes of acceptance and a recognition of the equal right of these children to participate in their community, parents will be more willing to welcome us into a partnership with them.

c) Historically, people with disabilities have been perceived as objects of pity and charity.

This belief has led to very demoralizing outcomes for families who quickly realize there is a high price for getting things for their disabled child, the very same things which their other children got as of right.

The price for this is a requirement to put on a brave face, and an expectation that they must be grateful, and beholden all the time to those who deign to open their doors to them.

It can also result in families feeling eternally vulnerable, and fearful that the charity that has got them this far will collapse. The greatest risk these parents can take is to "rock the boat". Their greater dependency on external systems beyond their control reduces their own confidence. Little changes, even whispers of change, invoke great anxiety.

It is therefore very important that professionals' attitudes and manners towards these families always reinforce their competence, dignity, and maximum control over the situation.

These attitudes permeate all our lives, as well as our more formal social and governmental systems and institutions.

QUESTIONS:

What values and attitudes are behind present educational policies in NZ?

What values and attitudes are behind new legislation for the disabled?

Parents as First Teachers — Pilot Project

Janice Grigor, National Coordinator
Dunedin

Introduction

The Parents as First Teachers Pilot Project (PAFT) was launched in New Zealand earlier this year. This paper presents background information on both the Missouri State programme 'Parents As Teachers' and the New Zealand Parents as First Teachers Pilot Project, and the development of the project in New Zealand.

In 1981, in Missouri, USA, the Parents as Teachers (PAT programme was initiated as a pilot project offering a non-targeted, primary prevention programme designed to maximise a child's overall development during the first three years of life and to support parents in this task. The New Parents as Teachers (NPAT) pilot project was undertaken in four school districts representing metropolitan and rural communities. An independent evaluation of this project was conducted and the programmes effectiveness determined by a treatment/comparison group design, using posttests of children's abilities and assessments of parents knowledge and perceptions.

The evaluation findings of the NPAT project, released in 1985, indicated the following outcomes —
At age 3 NPAT children were:

* significantly more advance than the comparison group children in language development
* significantly advanced over the comparison group children in demonstrating coping skills and positive relationships with adults significantly ahead of their peers in problem solving and other intellectual abilities.

Parent education and family support, beginning at birth, became a mandatory service for all Missouri school districts under the Early Childhood Development Act of 1984, with services being provided to 10 percent of the families with children under the age of three, (during 1988-89 appropriations allowed for 30% of eligible families to participate). The New Parents as Teachers project was retitled 'Parents as Teachers' because of broadened eligibility for all parents of young children, not just first-time parents.

New Zealand's Parents as First Teachers Pilot Project was initiated by Dr Lockwood Smith, who, when in Opposition, spent time in Missouri and saw the 'Parents as Teachers' programme in action. Dr Smith was impressed with the programme and on his return ensured that Parents as First Teachers was included in the National Party Manifesto. When National became the Government in 1990, Dr Smith undertook to fulfil his election promise and introduce the Parents as First Teachers Pilot Project, its overall objective being to trial the Missouri State programme with 500 first time New Zealand parents.

In August 1991, the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society signed a contract with the Ministry of Education for the implementation of the programme. The National Co-ordinator was appointed in October. Further contracts were signed between the Ministry and Dr Phil Silva, University of Otago and Ms Andrea Boyd, University of Auckland with respect to the independent evaluation of the project.

Launch and Background Information on the Project

The project was launched by the Minister of Education, Dr Lockwood Smith, on 24 March 1992. Enrolment of first time parents began after Easter.

The four pilot areas selected for the project are:

Whangarei
South Auckland
Gisborne
Dunedin

In each area there will be 250 families involved:

* 125 — in the PAFT programme
* 125 — in the comparison group

Prior to the parents agreeing to take part in the project, it is carefully explained that they will have an equal chance of either being selected for the PAFT programme or the comparison group. Participation is voluntary and free.

Both groups will continue to use the services provided now, eg. Plunket, Public Health, Kohanga Reo, Childcare, Parents Centre, Playcentre, Kindergarten etc

The PAFT programme will be provided in addition to these services.

What are the Project Goals?

The goals of the project are for:

The parent to have:

- knowledge of how their child grows and develops
- knowledge of how to encourage the growth and development of their child
- more confidence in their own parenting skills
- support and professional assistance with their child's health and development needs.

for their child to have:

- well developed language skills
- an increased ability to solve problems
- well developed social skills
- any health problems detected

How does the PAFT programme work?

Staff involved with the programme are:

Parent Educators
Liaison Personnel

Parent Educators

Each area has the equivalent of two full time Parent Educators who come from backgrounds of nursing, plunket nursing, early childhood education and teaching.

Following the launch of the project the newly appointed Parent Educators were involved in an intensive 2 week training programme prior to taking up their positions in their local areas. Sue Russell from the Parents as Teachers National Centre in Missouri delivered the first section of the training programme which was then followed up with the New Zealand component. The programme focused on the 0-18 month child and the areas covered included:
child development (social, emotional, cognitive, intellectual), language development, behavioural management, communication skills, books and 'junk play'. Further training will be held next year on the 18 month — 3 year old. Evaluation of each Parent Educator is undertaken once a year by the National Co-ordinator who makes regular visits to the pilot areas.

On return to their own areas the Parent Educators spent their first two weeks linking with health and education professionals, early childhood services, Maori, Pacific Island and other ethnic groups, and other persons/organisations interested in their project.

Parent Educators are making their first links with parents at ante natal classes followed up by regular visits to the Obstetric Units to talk with mothers. About a week after the mother has returned home, contact is made with the family and, if they wish to take part, the initial interview takes place. Parent Educators are endeavouring to contact as many first time parents as possible, to offer them the opportunity to take part in the project. Regular contact with midwives will, we hope, ensure that those mothers who choose a home birth will also be visited by a Parent Educator.

The Parent Educators provide to each family:

- regular home visits to share information, practical ideas and give guidance as the child grows and develops.
- regular checking of the child's growth and development, including vision and hearing.
- informal group meetings where parents will have an opportunity to share their experiences and concerns with other parents.

Times for home visiting by the Parent Educator are flexible and are arranged to suit the needs of the family, eg if the father wishes to be present or if the mother is working, then the visit will be arranged for the early evening or Saturday.

What sort of information will be given to parents?

- what to look for and expect as their child grows and develops.
- how they can provide exciting, educational experiences for their child without costly toys
- how to use experiences such as changing the baby's nappy, feeding times and visiting family as opportunities to talk to their child about what is happening around him/her.
- how to help their child develop a love of books and eventually reading
- practical ideas on how to create a safe environment that is exciting and fun.
- how to set realistic limits for their child's behaviour and what to do about problems.
- how to help the child grow and develop to the very best of his/her ability

Liaison Personnel

In all areas we have sought people from each ethnic community to provide the link between their community and Parents as First Teachers. The liaison

personnel are assisting with enrolment of families and home visits in response to the needs of each individual family.

As each area is different we have tried to respond to their particular communities. In Whangarei there are two Maori liaison personnel. In South Auckland: Maori and Pacific Island (Samoan and Tongan), Laotian and Cambodian. In Gisborne: Maori and Pacific Island personnel and in Dunedin: Maori, Cambodian, Pacific Island and Chinese personnel. Other liaison personnel will be sought as and when required.

Group Meetings

Each area has begun holding group meetings. These will respond to the needs of the group so each one will be different. It may be a support group, or the parents may wish to have a speaker or organise a visit somewhere. To date the first meetings gave the families an opportunity to meet each other and share experiences. Each group was also asked for comment on the format of future meetings and for ideas. This has resulted in meetings on: 'Introducing Solids'; feeding/sleeping, cot deaths; a pharmacist talking about medication; appropriate books for young children and a video being shown 'Glue Ear'.

Parent Educators are also supporting and encouraging families to use the services provided in their community — Plunket, Public Health, Parent Centre, Kohanga Reo, playgroups and early childhood services. If a group of parents wish to form a play group themselves, then the Parent Educator will facilitate this.

Evaluation of the project

Families who agree to participate will be randomly assigned to either the PAFT programme or the comparison groups so that the project can be properly evaluated. This evaluation, and reviews to see how the project is going, will be carried out by the Universities of Auckland and Otago.

All children will be assessed on health and development progress at age 3.

Some children from both groups will be also be assessed at 18 months.

How is the project going to date?

Enrolment for the project continues to go well, although the birth numbers seem to fluctuate in each area. One week there seems to be a number of first born babies and then the next week very few. Families also seem to be very mobile, with a number of eligible parents moving within the time frame of the project, particularly in the South Auckland area. Currently both Dunedin and South Auckland are over halfway with their enrolment figures. Gisborne and

Whangarei, because of their lower birth rates are slightly under half way. The recruitment phase will finish at the end of April 1993.

There are a number of different ethnic groups enrolled groups for the project. These include: European, Maori, Samoan, Cambodian, Indian, Chinese, Singaporean, Tongan, Fijian Indian, Nuiean, Malaysian, Laotian and Thai. There are also people of other nationalities represented who are now New Zealanders but have been born in Germany, Holland, Italy or United Kingdom. The PAFT brochure has been translated into Samoan, Tongan and Cambodian and will be translated into other languages as requested.

There is a range of socio-economic backgrounds, life experiences, age and family situations.

From my observations after being on home visits with all the Parent Educators I feel that Parents as First Teachers is working well in New Zealand.

Anau Ako Pasifika

Puroku Hall — Tokoroa
&
Lineahi Lund — Auckland

Working with Pacific Island parents within the context of:

"Anau Ako Pasifika Research Project." A project funded since 1988 by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, The Netherlands and now with the Early Childhood Development Unit as Grantholder.

Anau Ako Pasifika is:

- a home-based intervention programme in early childhood education and care, for Pacific Island communities in New Zealand.

- with parallel emphasis on parent support and education.

The project is located in 3 areas, where there is a high concentration of Pacific Island population — Auckland — Tokoroa — Wellington. Tokoroa being its centre. Management of the eight staff members is administered by the project director and the clerical assistant/secretary. Two home tutors and the resource officer operate from Auckland, one home tutor is based in Tokoroa and two in Wellington.

The Advisory Committee, which has oversight of the project has one representative from three organisations:-

ECDU	Early Childhood Development Unit
PACIFICA	Pacific Allied (Women's) Council Inspires Faith in Ideals Concerning All
PIECAA	Pacific Islands Early Childhood Association in Aotearoa and the project director

Parenting

For those of us, who have been fortunate enough, having being blessed to be parents know that **being a parent is hard work.**

For a European parent, it is **simple** hard work.

Whereas for a Pacific Island parent, the dose is **doubled**. This simply means, that I as a Pacific Island parent am obligated to raise my child so that, he or she is able to walk and stand tall in two worlds. The world of Papa'a and equally so, that of our Polynesian ancestors.

Generally speaking the rearing of one's child, tends to be a repetition of one's own upbringing. For Pacific Island parents, being removed from their natural environment of child rearing, this would be quite inadequate.

One's own cultural-parenting skills, need to be enhanced and adjusted to enable the accommodation of the necessary non-Polynesian parenting skills.

A major component of the Anau Ako Pasifika Project is the promotion of quality early childhood education, from within the cultural perceptions with parents as primary educators of their children.

Parent Education: An Experiment of Nature or by Design?

Bruce McMillan — Otago University
Dunedin

1 Introduction

There is considerable attention being paid to parent education in New Zealand at present. Most of it reflects a belief that the failure of parents to rear children properly is the major problem. We are informed, for example, that

There is a widespread conviction among those working professionally in areas of health, education, welfare and justice that many children are harmed by their parents not possessing the skills to be reasonably competent parents, and that effective education for parenthood is vital in order to reduce damage to children.
(Max, 1990, p.177)

Societies do periodically highlight the assumed deficits of parents and introduce proposals for changing parents' behaviours. Calls for change are often associated with difficult economic periods: it seems that when the economic climate is booming, and the resources are available to pay for remedies to social problems, responsibility is accepted by society in general. But when times are difficult, the blame shifts to those least able to influence the economy. But it is new for us in New Zealand to have considerable political pressure and explicit governmental intervention aimed at bringing about changes in the way parents bring up their children. For that reason alone, it is worth looking at some of the assumptions behind the proposals. To do so, I shall not be commenting on any particular plan for parent education; rather, I want to think about how we learn to become competent parents.

I want to set the scene for this discussion with some personal comments, for parenting is an eminently personal topic. I am the co-parent of four young adults, two of whom still live at home, and two of whom are married. One of our daughters has a two-year-old son, and both daughters are pregnant. On the other hand, my own father is now 83 years of age, living independently. He is the sole surviving parent for my wife and I, and is highly valued by all of us. There are also various brothers and sisters, and their families, as well as the usual complement of aunts, uncles, and cousins. That comprises quite a family network. Within our immediate circle, my wife and I have a close family unit, which is able to provide friendship, personal contact, and social and emotional support, to a very significant degree, even though there are considerable distances between some of us. Our daughter who is currently in England, for

example, has been home twice during this year because of her concerns about my wife's serious illness.

Other friends, and specifically my colleagues at work, are also part of the social network for us. We are not alone in the business of managing our own and our family's situation, as again social and emotional support as well as material help is frequently forthcoming. We are particularly indebted to my work colleagues, however, who have taken over much of my workload as I carry out a much increased caregiving responsibility.

None of this is at all remarkable: it is a story which could be recognised in countless numbers of families throughout the world. So why do I mention it? There are two responses, and they influence what I want to say in this paper. First, I want to assert that our understanding of issues is never a matter of "objective, scientific fact" alone: the way we think about issues of general academic, scientific, and professional concern is shaped by our own personal beliefs, assumptions, and shared experiences. Meanings (including the meaning of "family" and "parent education") are constructed through our activities with others, not external truths waiting to be acquired. Thus my own experience of "family" over time frames the way in which I teach, research, or write about families in general. If I knew then what I know now, a considerable part of my academic history would be different.

The second justification for a personal perspective is because it provides the basis for a sense of hope that the satisfaction and enjoyment which comes from parenting outweighs the difficulties, limitations and demands associated with the task. I am well aware that when we are in the midst of childrearing with young children there is less opportunity for taking a longer perspective on life. Perhaps the chance to do so is one of the benefits of becoming older. Yet no parent education programme has produced this lifetime of satisfaction and value, nor have we been explicitly prepared to cope with the life crisises we encounter. But we have collectively amassed an impressive amount of learning, in terms of our experience of traditional "home-grown" know-how, professional engagement in matters such as teaching and social work, our various memberships of church, education, sporting or cultural groups, and our sharing with other family members as they puzzle about controlling children's behaviour, or agonise over decisions affecting their children's and their own futures, or cope with the trauma of (for example) divorce or serious illness. We have had a normal compliment of problems to confront in our lives. We all have a great deal of fun together, interspersed by the odd difference of opinion.
We are terribly "normal" and typical. And nobody from outside the family set out to teach us how to be so ordinary.

You can perhaps appreciate, therefore, why I am interested in the thinking behind the issue of parent education. If our extended family is so ordinary and untaught, and if there are so many others like us, how have we all learned to

become reasonably competent as parents to this point? Are we the minority group the media coverage would suggest in this respect? And what is different in New Zealand today to justify an official Government policy to introduce a specific parent education programme, which is intended to be available to all families with young children? The expense of such a programme, and the amount of organisation required to introduce it, makes it an explicitly interventionist programme. And since the current Government is avowedly non-interventionist, believing that the market-place can better direct our social objectives, why is it intervening?

2 Major Themes — The Value And Context Of Parenting

I want to suggest some major themes. First, that while parenting is frequently experienced as generally an enormously satisfying process, the public perception of parenting is that it is a particularly pathological case of crisis management. Media reports recently have been dominated by reports of child and sexual abuse, and clearly documented increases in crimes involving family violence. These are really significant issues, but (as I will suggest shortly) it is wrong to think of them as problems which "belong" only to individual families. There is also an awareness of economic difficulties affecting families in particular. We have always known that childrearing was expensive. For me, growing up New Zealand but close to the experience of the Second World War and the effects of post-war reconstruction, it was a fact of life shared by all. Those who are now becoming parents grew up during the years of greater prosperity and the promise of riches for all, but follow the downturn and recession of the late 1980's. There is for them a greater disparity between the hope and the reality which accentuates the experience of relative poverty. We have, if you wish, a larger gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots": and as usual, the dominating feature of life for the "have-nots" is children! The outcome of such a negative social climate regarding parenting is apprehension on the part of those who contemplate beginning a family. Choosing to become parents involves more of a shift away from the values and practices of a child-less adulthood than ever before in our society. (I mean here that the "values" of acquiring a house and material possessions, and the "practices" of adult social activities, show a greater difference between those with families compared to those without, than ever before.) In earlier times, "adult" is a label applied to activities which are definitely not for children or intended to involve children. There is thus more at stake in choosing to become parents, and it is more difficult to be a parent in our contemporary society.

My second theme has to do with the context for families and their functioning. Perhaps the most useful set of ideas in this respect are those of Bronfenbrenner (1979a), especially since his keynote address to the second Early Childhood Care and Development Convention (1979b). His emphasis on the four "systems" in which human development is embedded enables us to think of the mutually interactive influence of families, other settings for activities and relationships, the linkages between those settings, and the wider social and cultural context.

His ecological perspective encourages us to recognise that parenting is not something between one or more adults, and one or more children alone. Nor is parenting something people engage in as "time-out" from the proper business of society. If we heed some economists and politicians, the highest social function is defined as the creation of wealth through commercial activity, and the new "heroes" of the 1990's are those who become wealthy. Parenting does not create wealth. Parenting does not create paid employment. And even if it were possible to consider children as a "product" to which value may be added, it is difficult to add value in a context where no value is accorded. Rather, it is only when we accept that, as always, the most valuable things in the world are he tangata, the people, that we begin to recognise priorities. The currently dominant political rhetoric appears to believe that we first need to create material wealth, and then we will have the opportunity to renew society. I suggest that the maintenance and regeneration of society is inextricably linked to the creation of people and the conditions which facilitate human development.

So it is simplistic but essential to state that parenting occurs in a social context. We cannot consider families simply as kinship groups which collectively constitute society, and fail to recognise the influence of society beyond the collective powers of the people. We know, for example, that how parents care for and rear their children is shaped by the traditional and prevailing patterns of parenting to be found in their culture, and is influenced by social and economic factors beyond families themselves. We do not always recognise, however, that consequently there is no single model for parenting, nor even a fixed tradition of what is "ideal", for parenting styles are always in relation to current social conditions. By the same token, the process by which adults become parents and learn parenting tasks is as varied as the individual families concerned, and the cultures in which they live. In these circumstances, it makes little sense to expect a particular model of parent education to be appropriate for all aspects of parental learning, or all parents. Any examination of proposals for parent education must therefore consider both the context for parenting, and the characteristics of participating parents, as well as the educational model explicitly or implicitly embodied in the programme provided.

3 How Do We Learn "Parenting"?

One of the few results consistently emerging from studies of parent education programmes is that those involved enjoy the experience, and believe it to be of benefit. But nobody providing such programmes, nor the participants themselves, argue that their sole learning to be competent parents derives from the programme itself. In fact our conventional discourse about parenting and parent education severely limits our consideration of the learning involved. By emphasising the "learning" to be competent parents, we impose subtle pressure to locate the process within traditional frameworks of thinking. I want to review some of them briefly, in an attempt to clarify some important issues...

In some respects, we think of parenting as something virtually everyone can do. *It is like reading: some do more of it, or devote more attention to it, but most* people function adequately with only elementary instruction. A general course in child development is an example of this tradition for learning about parenting. Like reading, it does not require "higher" levels of education, and is therefore regarded as relatively straightforward. (Of course, if we were thinking of reading programmes in any country other than New Zealand, especially those in North America, we would immediately be embroiled in discussions of major issues, such as "whole-language" versus "phonics" approaches to the process of early reading. We are fortunate that it is generally done so well here that we have less argument about our school and family reading practices.) So in this sense, learning about parenting is rather like the acquisition of general knowledge.

Another strong tradition in learning about parenting emphasises the particular skills which are to be acquired. Programmes offering solutions for "how to control difficult behaviour", or "behaviour management" fit into this category.

One other model for learning is relevant here. We hear a great deal about the importance for our economy these days of on-the-job training, involving some kind of "apprenticeship" scheme in which an expert in a craft supervises a novice, and passes on the skills required. In many respects this model is a direct contrast to the "general education" one. The latter is intended to prepare people for the life ahead of them, whereas an apprenticeship is for a specific job now.

I contend that it is not appropriate to view parenting education as being modelled on any one of these varieties of learning experience. There are several limitations in the traditional schooling model. Can we really envisage establishing a system of abstracted learning (formalised content and curriculum) on which an examination system is imposed in order to provide assessments of students' learning? The tasks of parenting are much less amenable to formalisation than is, say, mathematics. There is therefore some cause for caution in endeavouring to formalise such learning.

There is, for example, some quite vigorous debate amongst educators about even the traditional formal subject areas such as mathematics. Among the aims for mathematics education expressed in a recent New Zealand curriculum statement is that of endeavouring to "develop in students the skills, concepts, understandings and attitudes which will enable them to cope confidently with the mathematics of everyday life", and also to "provide students with the mathematical tools, skills, understandings, and attitudes they will require in the world of work" (Ministry of Education, 1992, p 5). We could imagine a parallel set of objectives for school-based work on parenting.

The idea that schools should help to prepare students for "the real world" is admirable, but we cannot simply take those activities, turn them into a formal

educational programme, and then require students to undertake extensive study of the abstracted activities. The mathematics of erecting steel scaffolding, or of basket weaving, or of quilt making is not the same as the formal mathematics of algebraic calculations or geometric patterning. This is even more true when we acknowledge that the formal discourse of mathematics in school has been shown to have little relation to the "mathematical activities" of everyday life in studies by Jean Lave and her colleagues (1984) who investigated the judgements of relative quality and expense made by shoppers, or by Saxe (1988) who reported side-walk marketing by school-age children in Brazil, or by Rogoff (1990). Such work does not suggest that locating parenting education in school, with an examinable curriculum, is likely to solve the entire problem.

The significance of context in "real-life" learning has also cast shadows over a previously fruitful aspect of parenting education. The specific skills of behaviour management have been taught to parents for decades, on the assumption that these skills would transfer from one setting (family, classroom, or context) to others, and they would also generalise to sets of behaviours other than those specifically referred to. The evidence in support of such generalisation and transfer is not strong. There is also the risk that in focusing on the specific skills, we may fail to recognise the larger issues affecting families. Neatness and polite manners do not necessarily constitute adequate family or learning environments. Again, this is an area of enquiry which has received considerable attention in academic circles recently, with perhaps the work of Vygotsky being of seminal importance. I have written about that in another context (McMillan, 1991).

Some of those debating such issues in education have suggested that on-the-job training is a more appropriate model. For example, Collins and his colleagues (1989) refer to an "apprenticeship" model for teaching the crafts of reading, writing and mathematics. Again there is difficulty here, as parenting cannot be reduced to either a set of narrowly-defined skills, nor to a technical craft. In a very real sense, therefore, we need to recognise that general knowledge, as well as specific skills (some of which are learned on the job and others may be learned from more experienced parents) may all contribute to the kinds of parent competence we wish to produce. No one of them alone can do so. Even more significant is the fact that we cannot reduce the parenting to any simple set of skills or competencies. We may produce valuable taxonomies of skills, but it is always more than the sum total of any such list.

An equally important reservation is the fact that all three models of learning are based on the premise that there is someone who is an "expert" or "master parent" (if one can add the insult of sexism to the injury of arrogance). Parent education is so often provided by those who have a reasonable level of confidence or skill in parenting to those who do not. As Hess (1980) has remarked, the consequence of this "expert provider" and "ignorant untutored parent" relationship is likely to have as an outcome parents whose confidence

and competence is in fact reduced by exposure to parent education, not improved by it.

4 Some Conclusions About Parent Education

In discussing parenting and parent education, I have tried to clarify the fact that it is much more complex than it may first appear. Parent education programmes may have hidden agenda, in that they make assumptions about who is to learn, and what is important to learn. These assumptions impact on the participants. Beyond the particular programmes, however, there are also significant assumptions. The most dangerous of these is the belief that the ills of society belong to particular "at-risk" or "problem" families, and that these will be remedied by an educational programme designed especially for them. We do not know enough about parenting, or about parents' effects on children, or about the outcomes of any programme for parents, to be confident about such simplistic solutions. What we do know is that the context within which parent education takes effect is always much broader than any single family unit, for the learning parents bring from their own experience of being parented, their observations of other families, and their "filtering" of social and cultural pressures may work against the messages and information presented in parent education groups.

Despite this apparently negative approach, I am convinced that there is an important role for parent education, provided we understand that to be not simply a single programme, but rather a combination of conditions affecting the welfare of families. There is a place for general education into aspects of human development, and for skill-based workshops on aspects of parenting. There is definitely a place for a wide variety of parent support programmes which do not impose any particular view of "correct" parent behaviours. And there is an even more significant place for moves to change to negative impacts from social policies. After all, as Bronfenbrenner pointed out years ago, those who are most in need of parent education are those who make the decisions about our provisions for families, not necessarily parents themselves.

In that vein, let me conclude by sharing a vision. During the (current) American presidential election, we heard a great deal about the importance of "family values". It is a claim we have heard in New Zealand also, as politicians emphasise the significance of the family as the basic unit in society. Unfortunately the politicians seldom explain what they really mean by the phrase, and I realised that we could provide one.

We could begin with a general principle, one which reflects the value of parents' childrearing practices being directed towards establishing greater independence in their children, a process of real empowerment:

> Those in the family/society who have the greatest power should use it to empower those for whom they are responsible, knowing that in due course

they themselves will be powerless, and dependent on the goodwill they have developed in their offspring.

It would be wonderful for families if that principle were to be exercised by politicians. Or perhaps we could adapt and reverse the slogan of the market-oriented economists, who believe that making it possible for some to earn more will benefit those further "down" the social order. After all, if our whole society was to embody family values, we would encourage an ideology of "trickle-up caring" instead of emphasising "trickle-down economics", and some real parent education would emerge from the sharing and caring encouraged by all members of society instead of being designed to remedy problems not of our own making.

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ECDU Parent Support Projects
Te Roopu Maatua-Tautoko

Huhana Rokx — Rotorua
&
Meagan Pene — Napier

Background

The Department of Education established pilot Parent Support Projects which were initiated from recommendations of the Roper Report on Violence which argued that supporting parents of young children would strengthen the family and prevent violence. The Report stated "although no real community network is yet in place, that must be the goal, so that families and children are supported at every stage".

The evaluation of these pilot projects showed that families were connected with existing early childhood services, neighbourhood networks were established and personal needs were met. An outcome for families was an appreciation of the value of their parenting and an understanding of how they could encourage their children's learning.

Community development and family support is one of the main functions of the Early Childhood Development Unit. The Unit is a resource which the communities can access in order to meet their needs for parent support and early childhood education.

To a large degree the Unit's role is to determine what communities see as their needs and support them to address those needs and become more integrated and supportive communities.

Aim and Goals of the Projects

The overall aim of the Projects is to reach parents not currently linked to any early childhood education service and to provide those parents with:

(i) a listening ear
(ii) information about local support and education services and activities
(iii) encouragement to use these services if desired
(iv) practical help in extending parenting skills
(v) friendly support in coping with the demands of a young family
(vi) extra or specialised attention for young children

(vii) opportunities to meet other parents with young children
(viii) practical help in developing services and resources to suit local needs.

The goals of the Projects are:

(i) To enable parents to develop self esteem, self confidence and trust in themselves and to participate in their community.

(ii) To enable adults to participate successfully in the development and education of their children.

(iii) To assist parents to evolve community-based support and education networks that will develop self-esteem and self-confidence in parents and provide opportunities for mutual support and growth.

While there is no one way of establishing a Parent Support Project because each needs to be tailored to the particular characteristics of the community being worked with, the role of project leaders is to facilitate intended effects such as:

(i) encouraging networking among government and community agencies
(ii) evolving planned, coordinated strategies for supporting young families within a community framework
(iii) reducing isolation
(iv) helping parents enjoy their children
(v) parents recognising themselves as experts on their children
(vi) exchange of resources among neighbouring families
(vii) greater participation in parent and child activities
(viii) information sharing on children and their development and their neighbourhoods and their services
(ix) enhancements of parent skills
(x) increased access to and use of early childhood services

Projects operate from a community development perspective. There are not professionals deciding what is good for those who are considered to be unfortunate.

The basic principle behind a community development approach is to develop an integrated supportive community which will decide on its own needs and how best to meet them.

Community members are brought together to develop their skills, knowledge and resources in ways that enable them to become agents of their own change and development.

Concepts of empowerment, cooperation, coordination and leadership development are associated with this approach.

The Early Childhood Development Unit's main role is that of catalyst, coordinator, stimulator of self help, recruiter of helpers, teacher of skills, provider of information, support and facilitator of group development.

Principles of Delivery

The projects are based on specified principles of delivery which aim to empower parents and communities:

(i) to accept families as they are without judgement

(ii) to encourage people to take and maintain responsibility for their own needs

(iii) to gain the confidence of the people concerned by allowing them to identify and communicate their own needs, without developing a dependency on support services

(iv) to encourage parents' self esteem and self-confidence and give recognition to parents as experts on their children

(v) to reinforce and encourage parent-child activities

(vi) to encourage the exchange of resources among neighbouring families

(vii) to employ and support necessary link people on limited tenures to encourage flexibility

(viii) to have a management/advisory support group for each project which includes community people

(ix) to regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the processes used in the projects and disseminate this information as widely as possible.

In some places community organisations have been approached first so that there is liaison and coordination of various service providers and community leaders with an interest in families.

This group of people then help set up neighbourhood groups by developing the skills of key people in various streets who make contact with other parents to find out what they want to have happen.

In other communities parents are being contacted and brought together to talk about what they would like for themselves and their children in the area. Parents are encouraged to take responsibility for any groups set up with support from Early Childhood Development Unit staff.

Other likely aspects of projects are:

(i) the production of directories of services
(ii) toy libraries being set up in local libraries
(iii) community education courses for service providers
(iv) training opportunities for parents as group facilitators/leaders;
(v) employment of home visitors.

Some parents are quickly linked with existing early childhood services. Others feel more comfortable with a home visitor for some time or being involved with a small neighbourhood group of other parents and children.

Evidence from previous pilot projects suggests parents are empowered by this type of support and that real changes in families lives do occur.

Speaker Profiles

Dr Douglas Powell

Dr. Douglas Powell, visiting New Zealand as the guest of the Early Childhood Development Unit, is Professor and Head of Child Development and Family Studies at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, United States Of America.

Dr. Powell is a mentor for professionals working in the field of early childhood education and parent support. He has developed and carried out major studies of parent education and support programmes involving a variety of groups from low-income immigrant families to middle-class urban professionals. Currently he is directing a large project on family contributions to children's learning.

He has an impressive reputation as a analyst of parent support and child education programmes. His work has shown a programme's design is critical in helping parents improve their parenting skills. His research also shows there is no one right way to parent. This means moving away from a monolithic concept of parent support to programmes individually tailored to the culture of a specific group.

Dr. Powell is an adviser to the US Department of Education and to the National Education Goals Panel set up by President Bush's and 50 State Governors 1989 Educational Summit. Alarmed at children's unpreparedness for school, high levels of repeating grades in both primary and secondary school, falling educational standards, high drop-out rates and adult illiteracy, the Summit set six national educational goals for America to be met by the year 2000.

Dr. Powell is a member of a resource group charged with realising Goal One, "Every child will enter school ready to learn". This goal also encompasses the idea that parents spend time with their children every day helping them to learn. Dr. Powell was commissioned to write a paper on how parents can contribute to that process.

Editor of the prestigious 'Early Childhood Research Quarterly', published by the National Association for the Education of Children, he was also for six years the research editor of another leading American early childhood journal 'Young Children'. He is currently on the board of four other scholarly journals and is the author of more than 65 articles and contributing chapters besides authoring or editing four books himself.

Dr. Powell is chairman of the Early Education and Child Development Special Interest Group of the American Education Research Association and a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, both leading American educational associations.

He is also a member of the US National Committee of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) which collaborates closely with UNICEF and has 38 member countries including New Zealand. The organisation shares information from a cross cultural perspective and is an advocate for children's education. One of its achievements was the adoption by the United Nations of the 'Rights of the Child' charter.

Dr. Powell is married with 2 children.

Rangimarie Turiki Rose Pere

Rose Pere is Tuhoe and born and raised in Waikaremoana where she is starting a school to share some of the wisdom she has gained over 33 years in the education system.

Rose has taught and held positions at all levels of the New Zealand education system from early childhood to tertiary.

In 1982 she held a Visiting Teacher Fellowship at the University of Waikato in Hamilton and she has represented Aotearoa internationally as an educationalist.

Rose has written a monograph called AKO — Concepts of Learning in the Maori Tradition. In 1991 Te Wheke — A Celebration of Infinite Wisdom was published. Te Wheke, the octopus is a symbol from ancient Hawaiiki that illustrates the interdependence of all things across the universe. Rose's approach is a holistic one in which education plays a role in developing a person's personal, social, cultural, spiritual and intellectual growth.

In a Maori educational framework, Rose says, institutions do not stand alone but merge into each other. And the family across the generations, grandparents, parents, children are all both teachers and learners.

For Rose parents are the number one teachers and managers of their children's learning. As such they have an important role to play in the education system in New Zealand. She would like to see a much greater involvement by schools of the parents.

Rose Pere has also researched ancient teachings in the Americas, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Great Britain, East Asia and the South Pacific and is strongly influenced by teachings that stretch back to Hawaiiki.

Gill Cleland

Gill Cleland joined Plunket in 1983, and has worked in Porirua, Central City, Kelburn and Karori areas of Wellington as the District Plunket Nurse.

Gill came from a career in district nursing. A year in Borneo and another in Jakarta with her husband and children led to an interest in the development and support for families in differing cultures. Together with Helen Corrigan, she has helped set up a range of educational talks and support systems for mothers and families in the Karori area as Plunket has developed to meet the changing needs of families.

Helen Corrigan

Helen is a registered nurse, obstetric nurse and Plunket nurse with five children and two grandchildren. She has worked in nursing for over 30 years in many fields — obstetrics, surgical, geriatrics — and has been with Plunket in Karori, Wellington for the past six years.

She has had a long-time interest in education having been involved through her children with Playcentre through to University and back to Parents Centre and through her husband's work in both primary and secondary education which still continues in his present role as a professional education administrator.

Helen is concerned to see all parents being as widely educated as possible so that they can enjoy their children and make the appropriate choices and decisions for their families.

Jan Gerritsen

Jan Gerritsen trained as a primary school teacher and moved into the field of early childhood work when her children were born. She is a former national President of the Playcentre Federation. Although a generalist by background she did her thesis on maths and the opportunities for young children to experience maths before primary school.

Jan is presently Community Development Co-Ordinator for the Hamilton City Council and manages this section for the council. She works with groups delivering services, responding to community needs. Her present job brings her in close contact with early childhood groups and with the Early Childhood Development Unit.

Jan was involved with the original pilot Parent Support Projects initiated by the Ministry of Education before the establishment of the Early Childhood Development Unit. She was responsible for monitoring and analysing the Parent Support project pilots. Her conclusions formed the basis on which the Unit developed its own programmes.

Denise Gibbard

Denise Gibbard is head of Department at Sir Alexander Gillies Early Intervention & Family Centre, an early childhood service offered by the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand CCS (formerly the NZ Crippled Children Society Inc). She is also a representative for the Society at national level.

Denise took her degree at Victoria University and has a background in psychology. She had her first practical experience of special needs during two years with IHC. A stint working at the Ministry of Education followed before she moved back into the special needs area through a family interest.

Denise's present work operates on much the same philosophy as the Early Childhood Development Unit, that of empowering parents. The work responds to parents' expressed needs, rather than the centre making these decisions. The goal may be as simple as helping the child say the word 'Mum' for the first time.

Denise says that many of the issues that parents face with children with special needs are the same as any other parent but with the added question of the disability. Parents need to be realistic about their child's capabilities, without either over-estimating or under-estimating them.

Sharon Brandford

Sharon Brandford works with the Standards and Monitoring Service, an independent charitable trust which provides evaluation and monitoring of community based services for IHC on contract.

Sharon trained in Canterbury as a clinical psychologist. Her interest in working with special needs groups developed when she went to work in a psychiatric hospital. She works across all age groups but at present has a specialist advisory role in early childhood and family support.

Sharon says that issues of parenting are not different for the special needs groups. The difference lies in how society and the professionals deal with them as parents.

Sharon wants to see a change from professionals controlling the decision making process to one of supporting parents to develop the necessary skills in child management as a key issue.

Janice Grigor

Janice Grigor is the National Co-Ordinator for the Parents as First Teachers project (PAFT) which is currently being piloted in four areas of New Zealand for the Ministry of Education by the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society, Dunedin.

Janice has a background in early childhood education with wide experience in kindergarten, Playcentre and child care in New Zealand. She has also worked in day care centres in the USA and in the local equivalent to playcentre in Scotland.

Janice says the Parents as First Teachers project is a way of empowering parents through partnership, with the professional and parent working together.

Before becoming National Co-Ordinator of PAFT Janice was an Executive Officer with the Dunedin Council of Social Services. She is Chairperson of the New Zealand Council of Social Services and on the YWCA Board. She is also a member of a consumer consultation committee for the Otago Area Health Board.

Puroku Hall

Puroku Hall, a home tutor with the Anau Ako Pasifika Project was born and grew up on Aitutaki in the Cook Islands.

She came to New Zealand to train as a primary school teacher at Ardmore Teachers' Training College and returned home to teach.

Marriage brought Puroku back to New Zealand. She has three children and became involved in early childhood education for Pacific Island families in 1973 when she became a supervisor for a number of years at a Pacific Island Presbyterian church playgroup.

She is National Secretary of the Cook Islands Language Group Association and lives in Tokoroa.

Lineahi Lund

Lineahi Lund was born and educated in Niue. She trained as a primary school teacher and worked in Niue for eight years before coming to New Zealand with her family in 1973.

Lineahi worked with children with special needs during employment with Palmerston North and Auckland Area Health Boards for 11 years between 1977 and 1988.

In 1988 Lineahi joined the Anau Ako Pasifika Project as a home tutor.

She is currently a committee member of the Niue Advisory Council — Niuean Language Committee and Vice President for Kautaha Aoga Niue Association for Language Nests. She is President of the Mt Roskill Branch of PASIFIKA Women and a committee member for a Niue Community House project.

Bruce McMillan

Bruce McMillan has been a lecturer in Education at Otago University since 1970. He has special responsibility for the child and the family.

Bruce's involvement in early childhood education goes back to the 1960s when he first began conducting courses for education students and playcentre trainees.

In 1970, he also took on responsibility in Playcentre Federation and became Director of Training for the Otago Playcentre Association, a position he held for five years.

He is currently Patron of the Otago Playcentre Association.

Bruce's involvement in Playcentre began a major research project which turned into his PhD in 1982 on parent education. The first such intensive study in New Zealand it showed that parent supportive environments, with informal support networks were needed, not just programmes providing information. Bruce McMillan is an advocate for the empowerment of parents and this is reflected in his teaching and writing.

Huhana Rokx

Huhana Rokx is Acting Regional Manager, Lower North Island for the Early Childhood Development Unit. As such she is responsible for an area that stretches from Wellington north to New Plymouth across to Rotorua, the Bay of Plenty and down the East Coast of the North Island.

Huhana has worked in early childhood for over 20 years, training as a kindergarten teacher. She has worked in both kindergarten, Playcentre and Kohanga Reo. She has also tutored in Maori women's courses at Waiariki Polytechnic.

As the eldest girl in a family of 10 children, Huhana learned her own parenting skills early.

Huhana joined the Early Childhood Development Unit in 1989 and has wide experience of Parent Support Projects in the Bay of Plenty area. She broadcasts regularly on three Maori radio stations in Rotorua, Tauranga and Whakatane about early childhood development topics.

She recently composed a song "Te Tu Ahuru" (The Comforting Stance), which the Early Childhood Development Unit is adopting as its theme song.

Meagan Pene

Meagan Pene is a Parent Support Project Co-Ordinator with the Early Childhood Development Unit's Napier Office. She is Ngati Kahungunu and was born in Napier.

Before joining the Early Childhood Development Unit in 1989 she trained at Ardmore Teachers Training College as a primary school teacher.

Meagan spent two years in Singapore with the NZ Forces where she began teaching at all levels up to the 7th form.

On returning to New Zealand she became interested in Kohanga Reo in Auckland through the needs of her own child.

The family moved back to Napier in 1986 where she taught until she joined the Early Childhood Development Unit when it started up in 1989. Meagan broadcasts weekly on Radio Kahungunu on early childhood education matters and has listeners tuning in from the East Cape down to Masterton.

Parenting Promotion Launch Addresses

Launch Address

Hon John Luxton
Associate Education Minister

Tena koutou katoa
Nga mihi nui ki a koutou
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

It is a pleasure to be here today at the launching of this important promotion.

The Early Childhood Development Unit has a key role in education.

It is responsible for community development, advice and support to establishing early childhood centres, to Pacific Island Language Groups and Playgroup as well as advice, support and professional development to licensed and chartered early childhood centres.

An important aspect of the ECDU's role in community development is parent support.

To assist parents in this essential and nurturing role, there needs to be adequate support assistance and encouragement.

Ensuring that parental assistance is provided is a far more positive and productive response to the many difficulties that can be faced by parents.

I believe that appropriate parental support can go a long way to helping alleviate and in many cases preventing problems from arising.

The unit provides support for parents who are not currently linked to any early childhood services.

The aim of parent support project is to foster community development by enhancing parents sense of self-esteem and confidence in the parenting role.

These projects empower parents to participate successfully in the development and education of their young children.

Parents are also assisted in evolving community based support and education networks that provide opportunities for mutual growth and support.

Parent support projects are operated in four phases of consultation, development, implementation and withdrawal evaluation is an ongoing element of all projects.

Each parent support projects is different depending on the characteristics of the community being worked with.

However all projects share the same principles that will help parents recognise themselves as experts on their children.

Each project begins from a community contact, develops as parents become involved and participate and then ECDU withdraws allowing the community to continue what they have begun or to move on to different things.

Empowerment is the key.

The government is also assisting by making early childhood education more accessible for children and families.

We are also enabling those services to respond more readily to community needs.

In the last financial year, the government spent over $154 million on early childhood education.

During the last twelve months, 1,953 families have been worked with through 53 ECDU parent support projects.

Interestingly, these projects have also been used for other reasons.

Some examples include providing a contact point for young mothers not in contact with their own families for a variety of reasons and often because they were no longer living near other family members.

Another group was formed when grandmothers who had responsibility for their grandchildren decided to get together with other women with the same responsibilities. Out of that group a playgroup was formed for both the children and adults benefit.

Some have developed with groups of Maori families, particularly people not knowing about or not in touch with their hapu or iwi.

Each group reflects the individual and special focus that the parents need in that community and at that particular time.

The parent support project is able to give parents a base, from which to make decisions about meeting the needs they have for themselves and their children.

Today, the ECDU is launching its parenting awareness promotion.

The goal is to reach parents not currently linked to any early childhood services and to raise everybody's awareness about the value of parenting.

This promotion is a new phase for the ECDU.

It is a chance for those involved in work with parents to make links with other organisations and agencies doing the same kind of work.

It is a chance for all of us to take time to consider how important parents are.

Launch Address

Donna Awatere

The key to understanding Maori parenting today lies in understanding the fact that the Maori parenting system and the Pakeha parenting system are opposed to one another. The Maori way is based on a kinship system which is the basis for all organisation: the whanau or collection of families with many generations; the hapu made up of several whanau; and the iwi or tribe made up of several hapu.

The Pakeha way is based on the smallest possible family unit, the nuclear family, and the basis for all organisation is everything other than kinship. Housing, town planning, the family car, health care and education are examples of products and services designed for the nuclear family.

For us Maori, the entire universe is made up of parents and their children. All living things are descended from Ranginui and Papatuanuku, the first parents. We are all genealogically related to the fish, forest, animals, mountains, and waters. Our relationship to them is as guardians, kaitiaki, not owners.

Other differences relate to individual versus tribal or hapu based views of children. In the same way that no individual owned land or waters, no individual owned an exclusive relationship with their children. Maori parents were one of many guardians of their children. There is no Maori word for uncles and aunties, or for great uncles and aunties, nor for cousins. All the relations of the parents generation were called matua, parent. All cousins were brothers and sisters.

Our system worked for us because we were a wealthy people, who had the confidence that comes from running things for yourself. Our children were raised to have phenomenal oral memories, and enormous intellectual and emotional capacities.

Maori parenting has only really begun to make a change from being a whanau based to a nuclear family based since 1953 and the Maori Affairs Act which began the Housing Programme of pepperpotting and concentrating Maori in urban wastelands.

Today, most Maori families are partially nuclear family based, and partially extended whanau based. By and large we have struggled to adjust to the nuclear lifestyle that housing, work and legislation brought down upon us, and have been marginally less successful at this adaptation than most Pakeha. At

the same time, we are still a tribally driven people with strong day to day whanau and hapu ties

From time to time there are outcries from some sectors of the Pakeha community about Maori parenting. Maori parents are regularly blamed for everything from their children's learning problems at school to behaviour problems at school and in the community. We are accused of having abrogated our responsibilities, leaving our children's education in the hands of a Pakeha based system. And of leaving our children's health and welfare in the hands of government systems run by Pakeha.

These accusations ignore the fact that Maori were one of the very last peoples on this earth to be colonised. It ignores the colossal cultural changes we have undergone in the past two hundred years. And it ignores the real meaning of the word colonisation. Colonisation in Aotearoa meant all those things that added up to having to get used to Pakeha running things and doing things Pakeha style, whether or not it suited Maori people. It meant getting used to a great Pakeha effort to assimilate us and to eliminate all traces of a rich tradition based on family ties.

In my lifetime, programmes such as the Maori Women's Welfare League, Maatua Whangai, Te Kohanga Reo, Tu Tangata, Kura Kaupapa, Iwi Transition Agency, Maori congress and Maori activists have sought to re-establish those things that make the Maori unique. Our mana, our whakapapa, or kinship based system, our language, our guardianship of our land, sea and air resources. These programmes are aimed at restoring our economic base, mana and confidence to Maori families.

And what we do, we still do it on a shoestring.

Consider the case of the Kohanga Reo. When Kohanga began, each Kohanga got a one off grant of $5000. That sum included salaries, buildings, maintenance, clerical, training, everything. At the same time, Kindergarten got an average establishment cost of $2 million and annual running costs of $200,000.

Maori parenting is undergoing a healing process. The very heartbeat of our parenting system, the extended whanau, living together at the pa, with land and sea resources that was the source of their wealth, has been replaced. An extended family parenting system that developed over many thousands of years, and which had its own capacity for checks and balances was replaced by a nuclear family one in which we have had little experience.

Many years ago I was involved in developing a neighbourhood parenting programme in Otara, with a mainly Maori base. The idea was to get parents from the neighbourhood together to address and upskill themselves on a wide

raft of parenting issues. These groups became surrogate whanau, taking the place of the family who were now scattered all over.

I was also involved in a home based remedial reading programme. What this meant was that community people took an individual reading programme into the home, and taught the parents how to teach their children to improve their reading. What I learnt from these programmes, and what Kohanga and Kura Kaupapa show us, is that Maori parents are fiercely keen for their children to do well, and are only too happy to help, but have not known how to go about it. The spinoff benefits from the programme were that the number of parents coming to the school for all sorts of reasons increased dramatically, and that the positive techniques parents learnt improved the parent child relationship.

Kimiora Community School is the only birth to death educational facility in the country. We have preschool, Kohanga, Primary to Form Two next year, and Community education, a Bilingual Teachers College Outpost and Community Groups on our campus.

At the school, we have recently launched a comprehensive home based learning programme, that involves every child in the school having the opportunity to be taught at home by their parents, who are trained by community workers. Each child is assessed at school in Reading, Math, Science and Language. And an individual home programme is devised for each child depending on their strengths and weaknesses. The programme isn't for those who are behind the others. It also looks at accelerating those who are doing well.

Most of our kids are Maori, and these programmes work as healing programmes that help to heal the Maori parents' sense of alienation from their whanau base. At Kimiora we cannot ignore the fact that 94% of our school parents are in the lowest income bracket, and that something like 75% of Hastings unemployed come from the Flaxmere district. We cannot ignore the fact that 50% of our children have hearing loss and that there is a two year waiting list for ear shunts. We cannot ignore the fact that on any Friday at our school in any class there will be 20 children who are hungry, and that a recent survey showed that children are being kept home from school because they have no lunch. And this in an area that is the fruit bowl of the nation. These factors have soul crushing effects on both the parents and on us.

Our job at Kimiora is to do our bit, to raise our expectations of the children's potential, and to teach in such a way, that they achieve that potential. Our parents' job is to also do their bit to provide short daily individual learning opportunities in a range of subjects and to positively swamp their kids with good vibes about learning. It is only by developing this kind of specific academic partnership with parents from schools that are not Kura Kaupapa, that we will begin to see a turnaround in the litany of Maori children's under-achievement.

I must commend the Early Childhood Development Unit for your logo, "Kids — give them some time now, and who knows what will happen". People really laughed when we started the four minute reading programme. Four minutes. The reason we chose four minutes was that was how long the kids could concentrate for in the beginning. That was the limit to their learning span. And also because that's about how long the parents could manage concentrating for, and praising their kids for. But the outcome was better than we ever imagined it would be.

E ki ai te Maori: ma te huruhuru ka rere ai te manu. With feathers a bird is able to fly. Our children serve the very best parenting we, as Maori parents can give them, whether it is a nuclear family model, or a whanau, hapu, iwi family model or whether it is a complement between the two. Our energy, our time and our commitment are the feathers that will allow our children to reach their potential and fly.

Kia Ora.

Launch Address

Her Excellency
Dame Catherine Tizard GCMG, DBE
Governor-General of New Zealand

Kia ora koutou
Nga mihi nui ki a koutou
Tena koutou kua huihui mo tenei hakari
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Greetings everybody, greetings to you all.
Greetings to you gathered here for this celebration.
Greetings to you all.

Parents can be a bit of a disappointment to their children, when they don't fulfil the promise of the early years.

It seems to many children that, as they grow bigger, the two people who were the centre of the universe when they were little, become less sympathetic. The magic goes out of the relationship, I suppose you could say.

This isn't to say that children never, shall we say, contribute, to family problems.

But the bottom line here, is that it doesn't matter that children may seem never to emerge from one "stage," without immediately entering another -- it is still the responsibility of all parents, to manage family life in such a way that helps their children rise to challenges.

However, as has always been the case, this is easier said than done. Current pressures on some New Zealand parents are greater than they have ever been before.

Just looking after one, two or three children, and really paying attention to this one task, was always demanding.

But add such factors as unemployment, women entering the paid workforce, the greater likelihood of divorce and so on -- sweeping changes in the old ways of doing things, in other words -- and it's easy to make a case for supporting men and women in ways that help them become better parents.

Support the parents, support the children.

And of course, this is the goal of the Parenting Awareness Promotion. It simply reflects that being a good parent is not instinctive. Having children is natural, bringing them up is cultural, and therefore can and must be learned.

You may have noticed that the theme of the decorations here this morning is that of kites, which struck me as a highly appropriate metaphor. Like a kite, we all want our children to soar. But at the same time, all kites need an anchor -- a string -- some way to bring it back to earth, if need be.

That, obviously, is the role of parents. And like trainee kite-flyers of course, all parents perform better with support, advice, and lessons from the experience of others.

It gives me great pleasure therefore, to declare the Early Childhood Development Unit's Parenting Awareness Promotion officially launched -- ready to fly.

I believe that the children here are now to sing a song about the kites on their way to launch them, outside.

As they get ready, I believe that there is a challenge for everyone in the Parenting Awareness slogan — " Kids. Give them some time now and who knows what will happen."

I suggest that one proof that the slogan contains a worthwhile message is to say it slightly differently — Kids. Don't give them some time now and who knows what will happen.